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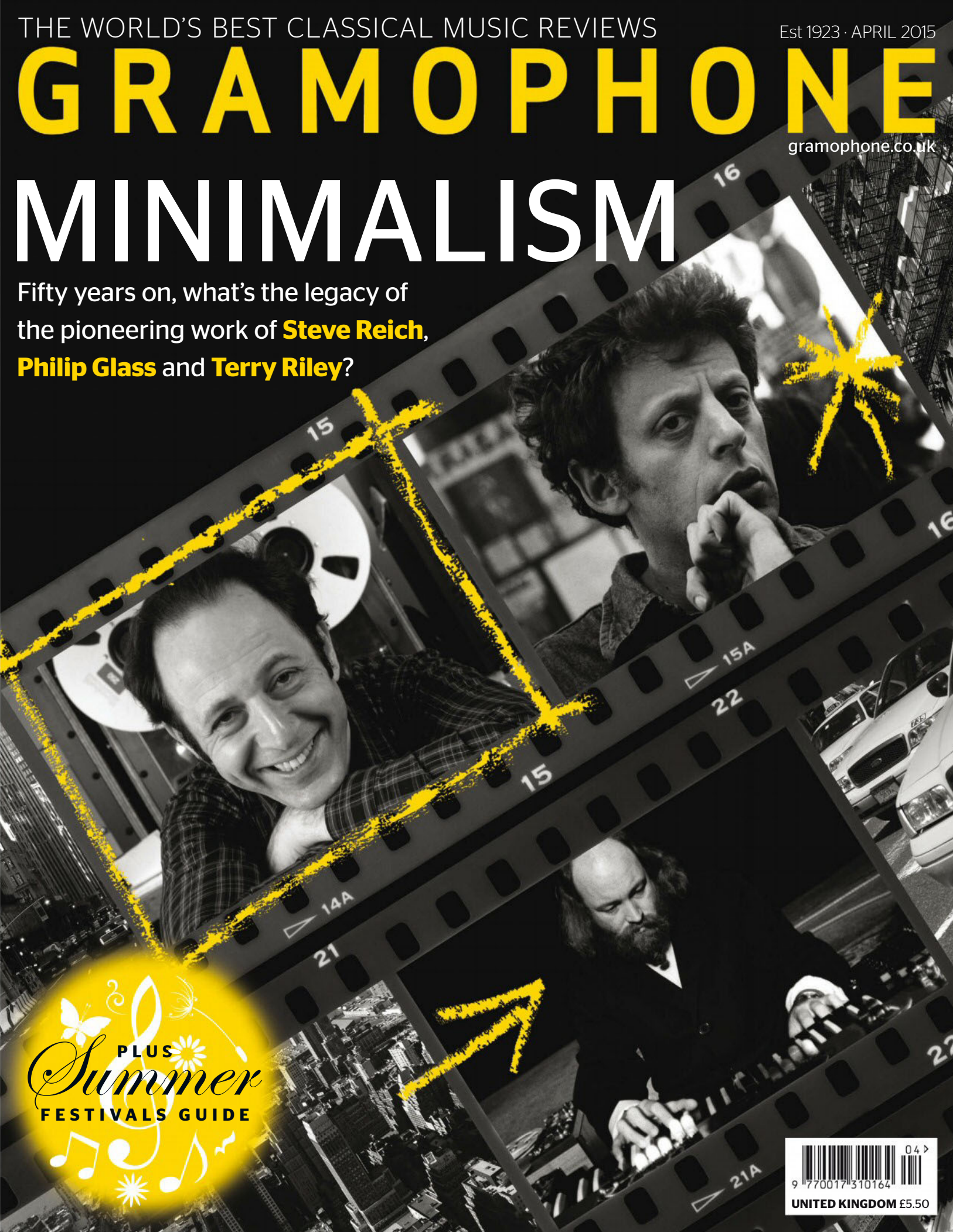
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MINIMALISM

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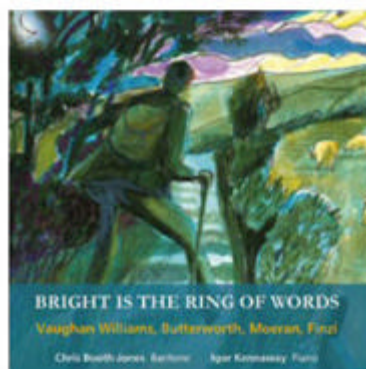
UNDER MILK WOOD: AN OPERA WORLD PREMIERE

Music by John Metcalf
Words by Dylan Thomas

Under Milk Wood: An Opera is the seventh opera by leading Welsh composer John Metcalf. The libretto is directly adapted from Dylan Thomas' famous play for voices Under Milk Wood. It premiered on 3 April 2014 at the Taliesin Arts Centre in Swansea.

Released by Ty Cerdd Records - a new label devoted to the promotion of Welsh Music

Ty Cerdd TCR013



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Chris Booth-Jones baritone
Igor Kennaway piano

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, BUTTERWORTH, FINZI & MOERAN

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Magpie Mag0502



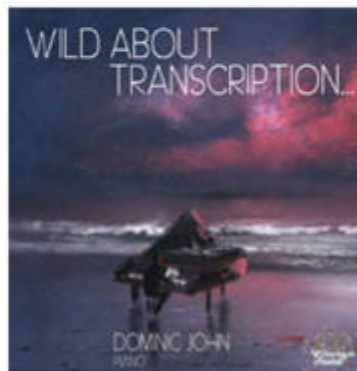
ACCORDION SENSATIONS

Paul Chamberlain accordion
Feargus Hetherington violin
The Maxwell Quartet

PIAZZOLLA: Le Grand Tango; Asleep; Loving; Fear; WEBER: Konzertstück in F minor; SCARLATTI: Sonata in F# minor K25; Sonata in G major K455; ZOLOTARIEV: Sonata No 2

"Chamberlain [is] a provider of virtuoso showpieces... astonishing breadth of colours and styles" Seen & Heard International - Edinburgh Fringe Review

Pentland Music CD02



WILD ABOUT TRANSCRIPTION...

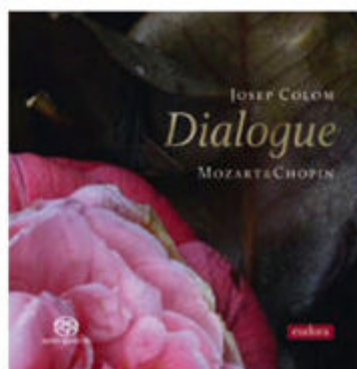
Dominic John piano

BARBER: Sonata for Piano; WILD: Fantasy on Porgy and Bess; KREISLER: Praeludium & Allegro; BUSONI: Nine Variations on a Chopin Prelude; RAVEL: Sonatine

"On this evidence, Dominic John has inexhaustible energy, phenomenal technique, bravura and at least four arms... astounding... cleverly programmed and well-filled disc, most listenable and highly recommended."

International Piano Magazine

Willowhayne Records WHR033



DIALOGUE Mozart and Chopin

Josep Colom piano

Includes MOZART: Fantasy in D Minor, K. 397; Rondo in D Major, K. 485; Adagio in B Minor, K. 540; CHOPIN: Ecosaise in D Major, Op. 72, No. 1; Prelude in E Minor, Op. 28, No. 4; Waltz in A Minor, Op. 34, No. 2; Mazurka in A Minor, Op. 17 No. 4 and more

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WIM HENDERICKX

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Raga III (2010) The Four Elements (2011)

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"Henderickx has woven a subtle, melodic web that beautifully brings out the text... the listener is struck by the delicate textures and the many overwhelming complex structures." (Cutting Edge)

Hermes Ensemble HMES001

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GRAMOPHONE



RECORDINGS & EVENTS *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Patrick Dupré Quigley

Seraphic Fire's Artistic Director on his choir and its latest recording

The subtitle of your new disc is 'A Century of American Choral Music' - there must have been music you couldn't include...

So much, yes - from Elliott Carter and Walter Piston to the younger generation. For every one young American composer featured on this disc there were at least another 10 that we could have included. It became clear, for example, that we could easily make an entire disc of young female American composers who aren't heard as much as they should be.

How did you come across young composers Jake Runestad and Colin Britt?

I have to admit, I'm as guilty as anyone when it comes to scrolling through Facebook and social media when I have some spare time; these composers are very active on social media and in a lot of instances they sought us out and connected with us. I'm glad they did!

Samuel Barber is right in the middle of the programme - is he still a central figure for

American composers, in stylistic terms?

Absolutely. Even though there was a sense for some time that Barber was becoming a European composer, his *Reincarnations* has become an absolute touchstone for American composers and an idea of what an American sound and style in vocal music actually is - particularly in how it responds to text. Thanks for noticing that we've placed the Barber at the centre of the programme; it certainly is, in both a literal and figurative sense, as the programme both builds up to it and moves on from it. But there's also vital context in the two traditional Shaker hymns we include here. This is music that is woven into America - a tradition those young composers and our singers are very familiar with.

Tell us about those singers...how do you achieve such extraordinary accuracy and blend within the ensemble?

I think of Seraphic Fire as a sort of all-star choir for the United States, so although we're



rooted in South Florida, our members come from all over the USA. We work very hard on blend through vowel sounds, particularly at the upper end of the register, and I'm very keen to sing with 'just intonation', so low fourths and low thirds, like how a string quartet might think about its tuning. It really makes a difference to the sound. But more importantly, our singers take that away and back to their own ensembles and classes, as many of them are singing teachers and have their own choirs. I'd like to think we're propagating a true national school of singing just through the way we perform ourselves.

JS Bach • Beethoven

'Mostly Transcriptions, Vol 2'

JS Bach Preludes and Fugues - BWV532 (transcr Busoni); BWV543 (transcr Liszt, S462).

Violin Sonata No 5, BWV1018 - Adagio (transcr Siloti). Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV639/177 (transcr Busoni) **Beethoven** An die ferne Geliebte, Op 98 (transcr Liszt, S469).

Piano Sonata No 111

Tien Hsieh *pf*

MSR Classics © MS1531 (71' • DDD)



The young Taiwanese-born pianist Tien Hsieh continues her series of piano transcriptions for MSR Classics with music by Bach and Beethoven as heard

by pianistic titans Busoni, Liszt and Siloti, plus one original piece by their fellow titan Beethoven.

As a multiple prize-winner and already an experienced concert artist, Hsieh has her commanding way with Busoni and Liszt transcriptions of Bach's Preludes in D major and A minor, while she changes course easily and uses a 'less is more' philosophy to discover the full range of physical beauty in Siloti's adoring framing of the *Adagio* from Bach's Fifth Violin Sonata. She particularly excels in Liszt's transcription of Beethoven's song-cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, its first recording in 10 years, 14 minutes of music that has been lost amid the profusion and popularity of Liszt's Schubert transcriptions. Hsieh catches spontaneously and joyously Beethoven's own open-hearted sweetness and nobility, and in doing so conveys a very

real sense of poetry being transformed into music.

It is a greater challenge to merge the dimensions of size and intimacy that Beethoven's Sonata Op 111 suggest and which truly compelling performances require. Hsieh begins with a miraculous, time-stretching phrasing of the opening bars, then is mostly content to lay out precisely the structural lines, applying great amplitude and warmth of phrasing, and letting the music unfold without haste - until, that is, a thrilling upsurge of movement into the chains of trills towards the end. The sound is full-range and natural. **Laurence Vittes**

Harman

'After JSB-RS'

After Schumann^a - I; II. 371^b.

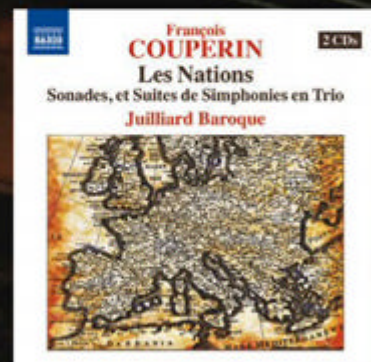
Concertino^c. Der Tag mit seinem Licht^d

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Idiomatic performances: Washington-based chamber orchestra Inscape record new ensemble works by seven young American composers on 'American Aggregate'

^aMeiYi Foo *pf* ^cYoori Choi, ^eJin Hyung Lim *kybds*

^bToca Loca; ^dMcGill Percussion Ensemble;

^dSoloists / ^{cd}Aiyun Huang

Naxos Canadian Classics © 8 573303 (56' • DDD)



Chris Paul Harman's simple yet intricate music seems to affirm the supremacy of

acoustic keyboard instruments, in this case the piano both by itself and in combination with an ample array of percussion instruments including tuned Swiss cowbells, crotales and glockenspiel.

Drawing inspiration from Bach's chorales and Two-Part Inventions and three of Schumann's piano cycles, Harman, Professor of Music at McGill University in Montreal, creates fresh, unique and seductively focused sound worlds on prepared, toy, non-equally tempered and mostly conventional pianos. Although each of the five pieces, written between 2006 and 2013, has its own identity, they share enough similarity that they could easily be listened to as a discourse on one continuous thought.

Pianist MeiYi Foo bookends the programme with confident, embracing performances of Harman's two moving soliloquies, *After Schumann I* and *After Schumann II*. As it should be, the references to Schumann are less obvious until you forget to listen for them, at which point they

become Proustian. Much the same thing is accomplished on a larger scale in Harman's imposing *371*, painstakingly extracted from the four lines of the last of Bach's 371 Harmonised Chorales and performed with cool urban chic by Toronto's Toca Loca ensemble.

The four-movement Concertino, performed by the very excellent McGill University Percussion Ensemble, takes off into a mildly gong-like sonic universe, like a Canadian gamelan. *Der Tag mit seinem Licht* is the CD's most purely beautiful music. Based on a chorale melody by Bach, it suggests the euphonious sounds of Mozart's music for glass harmonica.

Laurence Vittes

'American Aggregate'

JAdolphe Wordless Creatures **Bayolo** Wide Open Spaces **Gorbos** What I Decided to Keep **Hallman** The Extraordinary Gryssandra Wycke **Lincoln-DeCusatis** Oblivion **Spears** The Bear and the Dove (Blu-ray only) **Visconti** Black Bend **Inscape**

Sono Luminus ® ② (CD + DSL92179 (83' • DDD • DTS-DH MA 192kHz/24 bit 5.1, 96kHz/24 bit 7.1 & 192kHz/24 bit LPCM stereo)



American chamber orchestra Inscape's second CD features varied,

arresting, original music by seven young American composers.

Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis's *Oblivion* is a dazzling, often momentous 20-minute slice of life in an urban landscape through which the composer's own sounds seem fated for sublimation 'into a digital cloud'. Joseph Hallman's *The Extraordinary Gryssandra Wycke* creates a world of 'levitation, reanimation and death' so vivid that the sounds the instruments make themselves assume personalities as if they were characters in a Diaghilev ballet. Stephen Gorbos's *What I Decided to Keep*, scored for the full orchestra, is endearingly both fanciful and romantic; Gorbos credits the influence of Bartók's Fifth String Quartet, and it might be heard in the daring contrasts in energy levels between the music's continuous sections.

Dan Visconti's *Black Bend* is a highly persuasive, ghost-addicted blues, six minutes long, with a wonderful fiddle solo haunted by insinuating, expressive winds. Armando Bayolo's *Wide Open Spaces* puts a climate-change wasteland into a musical diorama that ends with a raucous jazz funeral band. Julia Adolphe's *Wordless Creatures* uses concentric conceits to protect her 'community of small, scurrying creatures' that are gentle but remote in nature. Gregory Spears's *The Bear and the Dove* (available only on Blu-ray and mShuttle) is an attractively dense block of sound moving slowly towards vague, radiant light, ending with a quote from Mahler's

CRYSTAL RECORDS

"Crystal is a unique and specialized label featuring outstanding soloists" – Fanfare



The Moerae concerns the **Fate** of humanity: the 3 "Moerae" are spirits from Greek mythology. They spin the thread of life, measure it, and cut it when they please. Dan Welcher's new work for flute, oboe, bassoon, and piano demonstrates this drama. **Fire** is displayed by the intensity of this piece and the thrilling Quintets by American composers Alvin Etler and Dan Welcher.

The Westwood Wind Quintet has "a standard of ensemble playing that is nothing short of breathtaking" (International Record Review) and is "a complete and completely satisfying musical experience." (Robert Shaw, conductor)

Other acclaimed recordings by the Westwood Wind Quintet include:



CD601: Nielsen & Hindemith Quintets plus Divertimento for oboe, clarinet, & bassoon by **Erwin Schulhoff**. "I cannot imagine a better performance than the one given here by the Westwood Wind Quintet." (High Fidelity Magazine) Two of the best-known works for quintet plus a delightful piece by Erwin Schulhoff.



CD759: "The Westwood Wind Quintet offers yet another tour de force. [The pieces] touch all the bases, from reflective to rollicking and from reassuring to gently subversive. The group plays with both virtuosity and remarkable empathy throughout." (International Record Review) Exciting music by Tschernberdschi, Ripper, Berger, Hartley, and Kosins.



CD750: Barber Summer Music; **Ligeti** Six Bagatelles; **Mathias** Quintet, **Carlson** Nightwings. "a recording which, equally good in tone quality, balance and clarity, can also be described as superlative." (Gramophone) Summer Music is a "classic" in Quintet literature. The Westwood Wind Quintet captures these pieces in all their glory.



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JEFFREY ZEIGLER > SOMETHING OF LIFE

PRISM > HERITAGE / EVOLUTION, VOL.1

DAN ROMAN > MUSICA DE PALLADIUM

PAT O'KEEFE > CONTENTS MAY DIFFER

ANNE LEBARON > CRESCENT CITY

CLOCKED OUT > TIME CRYSTALS

JUSTIN MERRITT > BLENDER

nu:enouir:mm



Eighth Symphony. The crack, idiomatic performances bode well for Inscape's next Sono Luminus recording, David Plylar's new transcription of *Petrushka* for the chamber orchestra's 17 principal musicians.

Laurence Vittes

'Fantasticus'

'Extravagant and Virtuoso Music of the German 17th Century'

Anonymous Ciaconna **Bertali** Sonatas – a 3 in D minor; a 4 in D minor; No 10 **Buxtehude** Prelude, BuxWV163. Sonata, BuxWV271 **Kerll** Sonata a 2 **Oswald** Sonata a 3 **Schmeltzer** Polnische Sackpfeiffen **Vierdanck** Canzona No 21 **Weckmann** Sonatas – No 2 a 4; No 9 a 4 **Quicksilver** Acis Productions © APL94710 (80' • DDD)



Quicksilver signifies something unpredictable and swiftly responsive. It's

the perfect name for an ensemble that revels in celebrating early music of the highest quality – and that demands exceptional instrumental skills. The newest Quicksilver recording along these lines is 'Fantasticus: Extravagant and Virtuoso Music of the German 17th Century'.

The disc's title is no exaggeration. Many of the works contain surprises around every corner, as the composers let their imaginations soar through curious shifts in metre, harmony and form that jolt and delight the ears in equal measure. But extravagance and virtuosity also are employed to more subtle effect, with the players spinning long lines coloured by delicately applied ornaments, and altering dynamics and phrasing to highlight the music's expressive beauty. Matthias Weckmann's Sonata No 2 a 4 is a treasure in this respect.

Along with Weckmann, the programme includes pieces by such experts in the art of *stylus fantasticus* as Dieterich Buxtehude and lesser-known colleagues Antonio Bertali, Johann Kaspar Kerll, Andreas Oswald, Johann Schmeltzer and Johannes Vierdanck, as well as that most omnipresent of composers, Anonymous, who contributes a sprightly *Ciaconna*. Schmeltzer's *Polnische Sackpfeiffen* is a particular joy, its juxtaposition of Polish folk tunes and elegant writing for bagpipers vivaciously conjured by violinists Robert Mealy and Julie Andrijeski – up until the music falls asleep at the end.

Everyone in Quicksilver commands attention, from Greg Ingles's suave

trombone and Dominc Teresi's woody dulcian to the group's basso continuo wizards: David Morris (viola da gamba), Avi Stein (harpsichord and organ) and Charles Weaver (theorbo and guitar). Fantasticus, indeed. **Donald Rosenberg**

'Reflections'

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 28, Op 101 **Guastavino** Sonatina in G minor **Liebermann** Gargoyles, Op 29 **Ravel** Miroirs **Rasa Vitkauskaitė** pf Ongaku © 024 124 (73' • DDD)



The Lithuanian pianist Rasa Vitkauskaitė divides her newest recital between beloved

works and more recent fare, all of which benefit from artistry of poetic and observant sensitivity. Pieces by Ravel and Beethoven show her to be a musician with a keen ear for colour and structure. In music by Lowell Liebermann and Carlos Guastavino, Vitkauskaitė tames the varied demands and shapes vital, glowing performances.

The five movements of Ravel's *Miroirs* are opportunities for a pianist to achieve clarity amid figurations thick with notes. Vitkauskaitė brings delicate and vivid etching to these miniatures, especially the dreamy images of 'Une barque sur l'océan' and Spanish-inflected rhythms in 'Alborado del gracioso'. She is equally illuminating and nuanced in Liebermann's 1989 cycle *Gargoyles*, whose four dramatic movements evoke menacing, mysterious and fiery atmospheres.

Beethoven's Sonata in A major, Op 101, poses altogether different challenges in terms of phrasing, architecture and pacing. Vitkauskaitė finds a fine balance between lyricism and buoyancy, applying judicious flexibility to lines while maintaining narrative cohesion. The dotted rhythms and knotty harmonic twists in the second movement's march have a welcome experimental edge and the pianist exudes celebratory zest in the finale.

Vitkauskaitė pays high tribute to the Argentine composer Guastavino (1912–2000) by programming his Sonatina in G minor (1945). In three short, appealing movements, the music shows the influence of Romantic composers, notably the brooding lyricism of Rachmaninov, even as it sings in its own dynamic voice. Vitkauskaitė caresses and animates every phrase. **Donald Rosenberg**

'Reincarnations'

'A Century of American Choral Music'

Anonymous Followers of the Lamb (Shaker tune, arr Dieterich). Give good gifts one to another (Mount Lebanon Hymnal) **Barber** Reincarnations, Op 16 **Britt** As there are flowers **Crabtree** The Valley of Delight – Death and Resurrection **Crouch** Light of Common Day **DiOrio** I Am **Forrest** Good night, dear heart **Lauridsen** Mid-Winter Songs **Muhly** I cannot attain unto it **Runestad** Fear not, dear friend **Ticheli** Earth Song **Seraphic Fire / Patrick Dupré Quigley** with **Anna Fateeva** pf Seraphic Fire © (74' • DDD)



Seraphic Fire apply bounteous vocal heat to the music on their new disc,

'Reincarnations', a survey of American choral music from the late 19th century to today. The recording takes its name from the cycle of three songs Samuel Barber composed while a student at the Curtis Institute of Music. They are models of what might be termed an American style – poetic, proud, occasionally rooted in folk traditions.

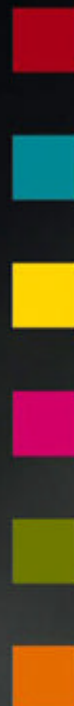
What sets the recording apart is Seraphic Fire's attention to recent compositions. Of the 12 works, seven here receive world-premiere recordings. They range from Nico Muhly's intricately layered and oscillating *I cannot attain unto it* and Shawn Crouch's shining *Light of Common Day* to Dan Forrest's richly expressive *Good night, dear heart* and Colin Britt's fervent *As there are flowers*, with its subterranean bass-lines.

Dominick DiOrio's *I Am* is a haunting weave of clustered lines suggesting heaven, the voice of an angel emerging near the end. The aura is alternately hushed and urgent in Jake Runestad's *Fear not, dear friend*, while mild dissonances give way to serene gestures in Frank Ticheli's *Earth Song*. Following two traditional tunes from the 19th century, the final portion of Paul Crabtree's cycle *The Valley of Delight* achieves glowing life through soaring lines and lilting rhythms. The disc is rounded out by Morten Lauridsen's *Mid-Winter Songs*, eloquent settings of five poems by Robert Graves that juxtapose the heraldic with the lyrical, and occasionally stop singing for impassioned piano solos (superbly played by Anna Fateeva).

The South Florida-based ensemble bring mellifluous and crystalline artistry to everything as led by their Artistic Director, Patrick Dupré Quigley. **Donald Rosenberg**



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THE SCENE

Ax brings French music to New York, Kavakos plays the Sibelius in Washington, Davis conducts Verdi in Toronto, and Charleston hosts more than 30 chamber music concerts as part of Spoleto Festival USA

NEW YORK, NY

Lincoln Center

Great Performers: Emanuel Ax (May 7); Europa Galante (May 10)

The final two concerts in Lincoln Center's season-long celebration of great performers look to the music of France and Italy respectively. Pianist Emanuel Ax presents a French recital, including Bizet's *Variations chromatiques*, Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin*, and Debussy's *Estantes*, *Hommage à Rameau* and *L'isle joyeuse*. He concludes with Chopin's dramatic Four Scherzos. The Italian period-instrument ensemble Europa Galante — led by violinist/conductor Fabio Biondi — celebrate less-familiar composers from Milan (Monza, Sammartini, Scaccia and Brioschi) and early Mozart symphonies which reveal a strong Italian influence on the young composer.

lincolncenter.org

WASHINGTON, DC

National Symphony Orchestra

Kavakos residency with Eschenbach (May 7-9, 11)

Violinist Leonidas Kavakos begins a two-week residency at the Kennedy Center with a performance of Sibelius's Violin Concerto in D minor. Christoph Eschenbach leads the National Symphony Orchestra in a programme that also includes Mahler's Symphony No 5. Another highlight: Kavakos and Eschenbach perform an evening of music for piano and violin, with repertoire to be announced.

kennedy-center.org

TORONTO, ON

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Verdi Requiem (May 21-23)

Conductor Laureate Sir Andrew Davis celebrates his 40-year connection with the TSO with a performance of Verdi's Requiem, a work often described as an opera in disguise. It features four stellar soloists: soprano Amber Wagner, mezzo Jamie Barton, tenor Frank Lopardo, and bass Eric Owens, with support from the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.

tso.ca

CHARLESTON, SC

Spoleto Festival USA (May 22 - June 7)

The historic city of Charleston, South Carolina, hosts the Spoleto Festival USA, now in its 39th season. Theatres, churches and outdoor

MINNESOTA, MN

Minnesota Orchestra

American Voices: Light and Gold (May 8-10)

Grammy-winning American conductor and composer Eric Whitacre is best known for his innovative and tech-savvy virtual choir projects. In May, he will present no fewer than four world premieres in collaboration with the Minnesota Orchestra and the Minnesota Chorale, following three performances last year. This year the focus is on contemporary American composers, and mixes choral and orchestral work, ranging from Aaron Copland's 1941 *Quiet City* to *Lux Aurumque*, Whitacre's own orchestral work for strings. This 'rock star' of the choral scene will also present a new large-scale work for choir and orchestra, *Deep Field*, which the composer/conductor has been blogging about extensively on his own website.

minnesotaorchestra.org

spaces accommodate everything from opera and dance to chamber music and jazz by world-renowned artists. Highlights include the American premiere and first performances in more than 350 years of Francesco Cavalli's Baroque opera *Veremonda, l'amazzone di Aragona*, starring mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux in the fiery title-role, along with New York Baroque Incorporated, a period-instrument ensemble. A second opera — the world premiere of *Paradise Interrupted* by Huang Ruo — is conducted by John Kennedy, designed and directed by artist Jennifer Wen Ma (who worked on the Beijing Olympics), and features Chinese singer Qian Yi. Notable, too, is the chamber series of 33 concerts of 11 programmes. The 2015 line-up includes the St Lawrence String Quartet, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, baritone Tyler Duncan, flautist Tara Helen O'Connor, violinist Benjamin Beilman, and pianists Pedja Muzijević and Inon Barnatan. Composer-in-Residence Mark Applebaum premieres a new work.

spoletousa.org

ST LOUIS, MO

Opera Theater of Saint Louis

The Barber of Seville (May 23 - June 27)

Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* opens the festival season for the Opera Theater of

EVENT OF THE MONTH

Whitacre brings rock-star flamboyance to the podium in Minnesota



Saint Louis, which has a long tradition of discovering the next generation of talented opera artists. In this production the American mezzo Emily Fons is Rosina and bass-baritone Dale Travis her possessive guardian, Bartolo. In addition to traditional fare, the Opera Theater is known for programming lesser-known operas; looking ahead, it will offer the US premiere of Handel's *Richard the Lionheart* and a new production of Tobias Picker's tragic *Emmeline*.

opera-stl.org

CHICAGO, IL

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Beethoven and Clyne (May 28 - June 2)

Chicago-native violinist Jennifer Koh and the CSO perform the world premiere of a new violin concerto, *The Seamstress*, a work by British composer Anna Clyne who is currently the orchestra's Mead Composer-in-Residence. Clyne creates genre-defying soundscapes with a mix of acoustic and electro-acoustic music. This is the third work the composer has written specifically for Koh. The programme opens with Berlioz's overture, *Les francs-juges*, before concluding with Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, under the baton of Ludovic Morlot.

cso.org

Previews by Damian Fowler

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Rattle: good news for audiences old and new

Few stories have generated such enthusiasm in both the classical and wider media as the appointment of Sir Simon Rattle as Music Director of the London Symphony Orchestra. Of course, such positivity can bring its own challenges in terms of expectations to fulfil, but there's no reason Londoners can't celebrate today while still approaching his music-making with the same critical judgement they'd apply to any other conductor. What is exciting, though, is the appointment of someone for whom reaching out to new audiences, particularly the young, lies at the heart of his perception of what it means to be a musician in society.

Rattle's tenure is unlikely to be marked by authoritarianism or detachment. In truth, the days of such maestros are largely in the past anyway; few conductors now desire to be such a figure. The tone was well set by the nature of the announcement itself. Not a grand unveiling in a large press conference, but an informal gathering of a small number of journalists around a couple of tables in a Barbican bar. Equally significantly, ours wasn't Rattle's first meeting of the day. Immediately before he'd come to speak to us, he had first met with the orchestra players. 'I begged them, "Can we at least all look each other in the face before we make any kind of official announcement?"' he told us. Rattle had symbolically – and quite rightly – sought to put his players before the press.

Rattle's musical strengths require little reiterating, though it's worth pointing out that few, if any, conductors operating at this level have such broad musical sympathies, and audiences will be keenly



hoping that the bond built with his new ensemble will be a rich one. Thanks to LSO Live, that relationship will be well documented, starting with Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri* this autumn. Given Rattle's role in the Berlin Philharmonic Digital Concert Hall's embrace of streaming, it will be interesting to see what the future might hold here for the LSO. Tellingly, when I asked about recording and broadcasting, Rattle defined success by describing a photograph of 'one of the biggest ethnic Indian reservations, in Minnesota, with a film of Mahler Second from the Berlin Digital Concert Hall, broadcast on a barn, on an enormous white sheet, with the words "You never know who's listening" underneath.'

Rattle speaks of the need for musicians to be 'evangelists, not just high priests... we have to find ways to spread the word as far as is possible.' Much of the focus on fulfilling such ideals centres on education initiatives, on taking music to audiences who might not otherwise have had a chance to hear it.

This is vital. But recording and broadcasting has always been part of that mission too, allowing people to explore music wherever they are, and not least in areas of the repertoire that pose box-office barriers for even the most risk-taking programmer. Opportunities are only enhanced by digital developments, including – as Rattle himself put it – 'things that probably we can't even imagine now'. Given the LSO's track record, I'm sure Rattle's relationship with his new London audience will be one that those far beyond the bounds of the city can be a part of too.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



EDWARD BREEN recalls buying George Malcolm's disc of Victoria's *Tenebrae* responsories as a teenager and

encountering 'a disc of Renaissance polyphony like no other... It shocked me but I couldn't tear myself away.' For this month's Specialist Guide, he has chosen recordings suitable for Holy Week 'which similarly capture arresting penitential atmospheres'.



'I analysed *The Rite of Spring* while I was at the Peabody Conservatory,' recalls Musician and Score writer

ANDREW FARACH-COLTON. 'Zinman was Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony at the time and I would take masterclasses with him. To discuss Stravinsky's masterpiece with him for *Gramophone* was a musical revelation and personal homecoming.'



'Writing about Hugh Wood was a special pleasure,' says **RICHARD WHITEHOUSE** of this month's Contemporary

Composer. 'I've admired his music since attending the premiere of his symphony at the 1982 Proms. Other contemporaries may have enjoyed greater commercial success and more frequent performances, but time will no doubt address this.'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Mike Ashman • Philip Clark • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Duncan Druce • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Iain Fenlon • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Caroline Gill • Edward Greenfield • David Gutman • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Tess Knighton • Richard Lawrence • Ivan March • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • Ken Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Thresher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

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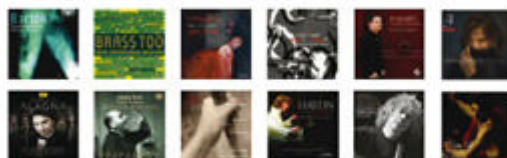
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Martin Cullingford's pick of the 12 most recommended recordings of the month

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All the latest moves and developments



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LOUIS ANDRIESSEN LA COMMEDIA (2CD+DVD)

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NICO MUHLY TWO BOYS

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'Confirms the arrival of a mature and striking new compositional voice. A work of great insight and compassion.' **Opera**



STEVE REICH RADIO REWRITE

The premiere recording of the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer's piece referencing Radiohead, performed by Alarm Will Sound. Plus Jonny Greenwood's performance of *Electric Counterpoint* and Vicky Chow's of *Piano Counterpoint*.

'Not so much a rewrite as a reimagining in Reich's hyperreal style; instantly accessible, instantly enjoyable.' **Observer**

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DELPHIAN



DCD34161

Purcell's Revenge: Sweeter than Roses?

Olivia Chaney, James Bowman, Ana Silvera, Jim Moray, Concerto Caledonia

Delving into the past is never a simple matter for David McGuinness and his indomitable Concerto Caledonia. But the present venture, even more than most, eludes verbal description. The group return – in the company of some starry guests – to the territory of their 2011 Britten tribute *Revenge of the Folksingers*, now engaging with music by Henry Purcell in a tapestry of arrangements and creative responses which is never less than surprising. Variations by eighteenth-century Scot James Oswald rub shoulders with the Purcell tunes they are based on, while original songs by Olivia Chaney and Ana Silvera and some literally 'electrifying' instrumental contributions add to the general air of expectations confounded.

New in March 2015



DCD34140



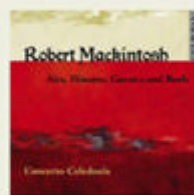
Captain Tobias Hume: A Scottish Soldier

Thomas Walker *tenor*, Alison McGillivray, Concerto Caledonia / David McGuinness

The best guess for Hume's birthdate could be any time from 1565 to 1579, and the materials documenting his appearance on the fringes of the London musical scene from around 1605 are sparse. This recording draws on the two books of music Hume published in his lifetime, and ranges from capricious fragments of tunes that celebrate the simple joy of playing the viol, to potent moments of substantial emotional depth. 'My Life hath beene a Souldier,' Hume declared in 1605, 'and my idlenes addicted to Musicke.' Concerto Caledonia have given us the opportunity to indulge in Hume's addiction.

'outstanding performances, full of life and vivid musical imagery ... a disc of unmitigated pleasure'

— International Record Review, September 2014



DCD34128

Robert Mackintosh: Airs, Minuets, Gavotts and Reels

Concerto Caledonia

A key figure from the Golden Age of Scottish fiddling, 'Red Rob' Mackintosh – named in the customary Gaelic fashion after the colour of his hair – found himself a place in the orchestra of the Edinburgh Musical Society and set up business as a teacher. *Airs, Minuets, Gavotts and Reels* (1783), published the year before his ill-fated move to Aberdeen, represents his desire both to understand the musical world around him as fully as possible and to forge himself a career within it. A chamber-scale Concerto Caledonia shed light on a period when the publishing of fiddle music books was in full spate and when the familiar forms of strathspey, reel and jig were still taking shape.

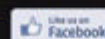
'Idiomatic, affectionate performances'

— The Arts Desk, April 2013

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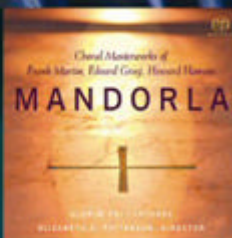
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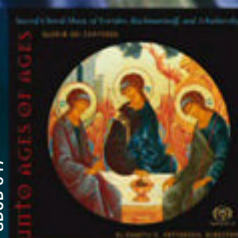
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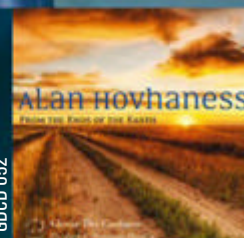
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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*


Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH




VIVALDI

Twelve Concertos, 'L'estro armonico', Op 3
Brecon Baroque / Rachel Podger *vn*
Channel Classics
B 2  CCSSA36515
► **LINDSAY KEMP'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 46**

For all the stardom bestowed on many of today's violinist, few are as continually inspiring as Rachel Podger, both to hear but clearly – given the magnificent sense of rapport that's so evident in all her releases, not least this one – to work with too.



JS BACH

Goldberg Variations
Britten Sinfonia / Thomas Gould
Harmonia Mundi
F  HMU80 7633

Sitkovetsky's *Goldberg* transcription really illuminates the inventiveness in Bach's music, not least when played as superbly as it is here.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 48**



'AND THE BRIDGE IS LOVE'


English Chamber Orchestra / Julian Lloyd Webber
Naxos B 8 573250

Julian Lloyd Webber, here as (primarily) conductor, offers an impressive disc of English music that demonstrates a richly rewarding affinity for the repertoire.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



BEETHOVEN

Complete Works for Cello and Piano
Matt Haimovitz *vc*
Christopher O'Riley *fp*
Pentatone F 

PTC5186 475
Haimovitz and O'Riley impress in both the lyrical moments and those in which completely committed drive is required.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**



BEETHOVEN

'The Complete String Quartets, Vol 1'
Elias Quartet
Wigmore Hall Live B 2
WHLIVE0073

The former BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists have a boldness of playing that grips you from the beginning. It bodes extraordinarily well for the cycle.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**



STANFORD

Chamber Works
Gould Piano Trio with
David Adams *va*
Naxos B 8 573388

It's more than three years since the previous Stanford volume from this superb group: they clearly love this music, and it's a joyous listen to place alongside its equally fine predecessors.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 73**



DOHNÁNYI

'The Complete Solo Piano Music, Vol 3'
Martin Roscoe *pf*
Hyperion F CDA38033

The ever-impressive Martin Roscoe continues his Dohnányi survey with this disc of the composer's complete solo piano works, often beguiling music and all brilliantly played.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



LISZT

'The Complete Songs, Vol 3'
Gerald Finley *bar*
Julius Drake *pf*
Hyperion F CDA67956

Gerald Finley's approach gives these songs a captivatingly personal dimension, their originality feeling newly discovered in these impressive performances.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 98**



VALLS

Choral Works
La Grande Chapelle / Albert Recasens
Lauda F LAU014

The controversy surrounding this Mass in 1702 may feel far away, but the performance of this composer's spirited Iberian polyphony is as vivid as one could wish for.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 103**



'A PAINTED TALE'

Nicholas Phan *ten*
Michael Leopold *lute*
Ann Marie Morgan
va da gamba
Avie F AV2325

As shown by this programme of Dowland, Purcell and others, Nicholas Phan is a wonderfully communicative tenor: a fine follow-up to his two Britten recitals.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 107**

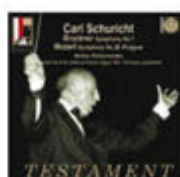


DVD FRANCK

'Father of the Organ Symphony'
Fugue State Films F 4
FSFDVD009

From the biographical to the technical, a remarkably comprehensive exploration of Franck the organist and his music.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE

BRUCKNER Symphony
No 7 **MOZART** Symphony
No 38 **BPO / Carl Schuricht**
Testament mono M 2
SBT2 1498

'Utterly unmissable' writes Rob Cowan of this Bruckner 7/Mozart *Prague* pairing.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 119**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD



Sir Simon Rattle (centre, front) with smiling members of the LSO on the morning of the announcement

Simon Rattle appointed Music Director of the London Symphony Orchestra

Sir Simon Rattle has been appointed Music Director of the London Symphony Orchestra, a role he assumes in 2017. Rattle, who recently celebrated his 60th birthday, is currently Principal Conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, a post he has held since 2002 and which he will relinquish when his contract expires in 2018. Rattle will be the second conductor to have held the top job with both orchestras – Claudio Abbado was the LSO's Principal Conductor from 1979 to 1988 and the BPO's from 1989 to 2002.

Of the appointment, Rattle said: 'During my work with the LSO over the last years, I noticed that despite the orchestra's long and illustrious history, they almost never refer to it. Instead, refreshingly, they talk about the future, what can they make anew, what can they improve, how can they reach further into the community. In terms of musical excellence, it is clear that the

sky's the limit, but equally important, in terms of philosophy, they constantly strive to be a 21st-century orchestra. We share a dream in which performing, teaching and learning are indivisible, with wider dissemination of our art at its centre. I cannot imagine a better or more inspiring way to spend my next years, and feel immensely fortunate to have the LSO as my musical family and co-conspirators.'

When asked about the tenure at the press conference, Rattle announced, 'This is my last big job.' The contract is initially for five years but has the potential to roll on for longer. Rattle added, 'It's obvious in all our minds that this is a long-term thing.' Rattle will remain resident in Berlin, where his children attend school, but will spend four months a year in London.

A feasibility study for a new concert hall in London is underway, but Rattle said that his appointment wasn't contingent on a new hall.

Kathryn McDowell, Managing Director of the LSO, said: 'This is the realisation of a dream. We look forward to a new chapter of ambitious music-making that reaches deep into the communities we serve and touches people's lives with the power of music.'

Rattle's reputation was built during his tenure as, first, Principal Conductor and Artistic Adviser and then Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (1980-98), during which time he made a huge number of

Alan Gilbert to leave the New York Philharmonic

Alan Gilbert, Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, has said he will be stepping down from the post in 2017. The conductor, aged 47 and a native New Yorker, will have been at the helm of the NYPO for eight seasons. The reason he has cited is that with the renovation (planned for 2019) of the orchestra's home venue, Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center, he wants his successor to be able to head up the orchestra during the period away from the hall and take it back into the hall thereafter.

Gilbert has presided over a shake-up of repertoire at the NYPO with a renewed focus on contemporary music. He has also recently completed a cycle of the Nielsen symphonies which was recorded by Dacapo and which has garnered considerable critical acclaim.

Wigmore Hall to start streaming concerts from next season

Wigmore Hall will begin streaming performances from the 2015/16 season, joining international institutions including the Berlin Philharmonie and France's new Philharmonie de Paris in offering audiences throughout the world the chance to watch their music-making live.

Major refurbishment work at the iconic London venue, planned for the summer, will include the installation of state-of-the-art digital facilities which will give the ability to capture and stream concerts. Further details will be announced in the autumn, but it is suggested that potentially up to one concert a month might be made available, and that they will be free to watch.



recordings for EMI, including a number of *Gramophone* Award-winners. Rattle's relationship with the LSO on disc dates back to July 1977 when he recorded piano concertos by Prokofiev and Ravel with Andrei Gavrilov for EMI. As *Gramophone* critic Robert Layton wrote in September 1978, 'At no time was there any doubt in my mind that there was a strong musical personality at the helm and a conductor of keen responsiveness and sensitivity.'



Entrance of the singer: Mahler's much-loved song

Mahler song offered to the world

A facsimile edition of Mahler's *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* ('I am lost to the world'), complete with historical background, has been published by Gilbert Kaplan, who purchased the score in 2004. Visit *Gramophone's* website for a gallery of excerpts from the 92-page publication, which also includes the piano version, preliminary sketches and pages from a copy Alma Mahler made for the printer.

Mark Simpson given new role with the BBC Philharmonic

The clarinettist and composer Mark Simpson (b1988) has been named as the BBC Philharmonic's new Composer-in-Association.

Simpson won the 2006 BBC Young Musician of the Year competition playing Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto. He also won the BBC Proms Young Composers Competition in the same year, making him the first person to win both competitions. Simpson is also a former BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist.

His new role, which runs from September 2015 until 2019 will involve the composition of three new orchestral works, and the BBC Philharmonic will also perform his existing music for orchestra.

The LSO, London's oldest symphony orchestra, was founded in 1904 and has operated as a self-governing body ever since. It also claims to be the world's most recorded ensemble with an output that ranges from symphonic work and opera to film scores and games soundtracks. Its current Principal Conductor Valery Gergiev, who has held the post since 2007, relinquishes the role later this year to focus on his work with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra.

New report calls for creation of cultural 'Digital Public Space'

A report backed by some of the leading figures in UK art and culture has called for the creation of a cultural 'Digital Public Space', to be 'free from political and commercial interference and created solely for the public good'.

Such an online area would aim to ensure all publicly funded creative content 'be made easily discoverable and available to the public'. Once the commercial value of any such content was felt to have passed it would then be available for free, ensuring cultural content doesn't disappear as today's digital technology and websites evolve or are superseded. It would also address concerns the report's authors have about the influence that an 'over-reliance on the large commercial search engines' can have on the visibility of content.

The proposal was one of the recommendations of *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth*, produced by the Warwick Commission (part of the University of Warwick) following two years of preparation. It was chaired by Vikki Heywood (RSA chairman), and its commissioners included Sir Peter Bazalgette (ACE chairman), Darren Henley (new Arts Council CEO) and Sir Nicholas Serota (Tate Director).

The overall report argues for a greater understanding of, and more support for, what it describes as the 'ecosystem' uniting the UK's cultural sectors and creative industries. At the launch, it was suggested it could be seen as a 'score-card' by which the next government could be judged.



The new report from the University of Warwick

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PODCASTS

Martin Cullingford meets with Julian Lloyd Webber (pictured) to discuss his new recording as conductor of English works for strings, which also features his final recording as cellist (reviewed on page 62).



BLOGS

Gramophone's blogs are often at the centre of the debate when it comes to the latest classical music news stories, but they also often reflect on more rarified areas of music that are worth discovering. Recently, conductor Peter Phillips has brilliantly analysed Arvo Pärt's choral music, cellist Thomas Carroll has responded to the news of Rattle's LSO appointment, composer Mark Simpson has shared his creative process and his plans for the future with the BBC Philharmonic, academic Jonathan Clinch has told the story behind his completion of Herbert Howell's unfinished Cello Concerto, and pianist Christina McMaster has written in praise of women composers and artistic diversity to mark International Women's Day.

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Minimalist pioneers: Steve Reich, Terry Riley (opposite page, left) and Philip Glass (opposite page, right)



Fifty years of **MINIMALISM**

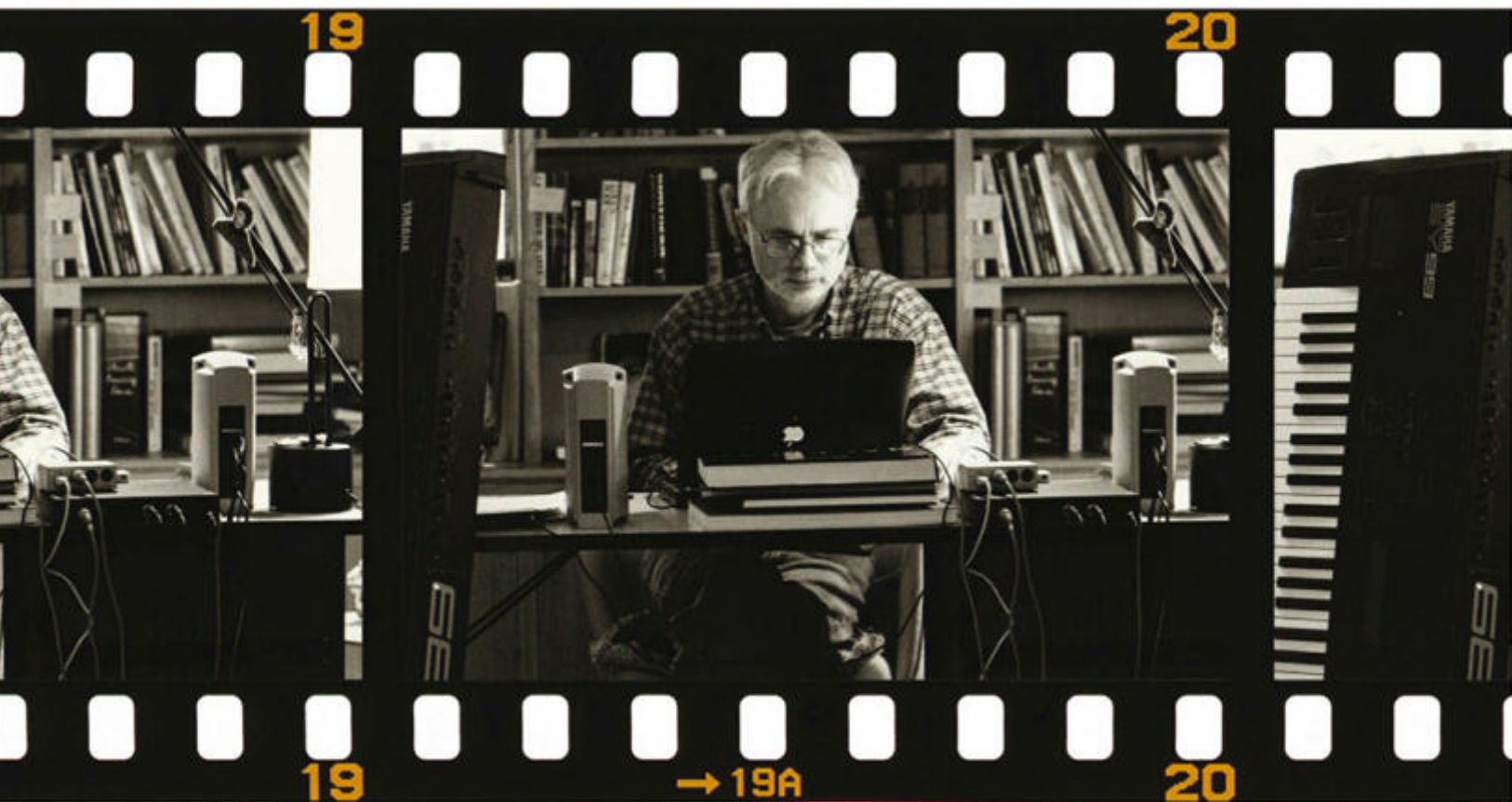
Philip Clark searches out the roots of minimalism and traces the development of the highly influential musical movement over the past half-century

The humble and subservient arpeggio, which had always been one of music's essential building blocks as the staging posts around which melodies were constructed and as the filigree of Classical passagework, found itself in the foreground of modern composition during the mid-1960s. It was as if a minor triad could fulfil Andy Warhol's decree that, in New York City, everyone could bask in their 15 minutes of fame.

As Warhol plastered the walls of downtown galleries with looping images of Campbell's tomato soup cans and the recently deceased Marilyn Monroe, the earliest pieces of Philip Glass and Steve Reich, performed in equivalent gallery spaces, or if not in lofts – no concert hall would have been foolhardy enough to give these arpeggio-fixated reprobates a gig – built apparently comparable structures with sound.

Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* of 1962 comprised 50 repeats of the same epochal image, bright blond yellow on the left, and on the right a phased disintegration of a black-and-white version that faded towards nothing.

Reich's 1965 piece for tape *It's Gonna Rain* opened with an equally potent sonic image: the voice of Brother Walter, a black preacher, proclaiming the words 'It's gonna rain!' which smudge into harmonic potash as Reich runs the recording on two tape recorders that are moved out of phase. Warhol's *32 Campbell's Soup Cans* was deliberately non-painterly – the same soup can depicted 32 times, the desired uniformity of each canvas secured by mechanical screen-printing. In Glass's *Music in Contrary Motion* (1969), a basic melodic hook was added to with each repetition scratching a similar structural itch. The aesthetic disjoin between



John Adams: a second-generation minimalist whose opera *Nixon in China* left minimalism far behind

Warhol's view of painting and those schooled in the European grand tradition could not have been starker. And these pioneering pieces of minimalist music kept European tradition at a comparable distance: this music was as far removed from Brahms or Bruckner as Warhol's work was from Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*.

Analogies drawn between this puzzling new music that, in the mid-1960s, had yet to acquire the envelope term 'minimalism', and the work of Andy Warhol, was one way that commentators of the time attempted to make sense of Glass, Reich and their compadres. When, 20 years later, second-generation minimalist John Adams premiered his opera *Nixon in China* at Houston Grand Opera, the critic of *The New York Times*, Donal Henahan, told his readers that 'Mr Adams does for the arpeggio what McDonald's did for the hamburger' – which was not meant to be read as a compliment. Fast food was homogenised and insipid, culinary pornography manufactured for the purposes of instant gastro-satisfaction. By making art out of soup cans, Warhol had abandoned the idealism of abstract expressionist painters like Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman and Willem de Kooning. The aesthetics of advertising had made an unwelcome incursion into the solemnity of the gallery space – and minimalist composition, too, propped up by nakedly tonal chord sequences and arpeggios, had signed a comparable Faustian pact; a dubious sell-out of purist modernist aesthetics.

But Henahan's sniffy attitude towards minimalism was not shared by his *New York Times* colleague John Rockwell who, in 1983, wrote an utterly joyful account of encountering *Music in Changing Parts*, as performed by Philip Glass and His Musicians, in a downtown loft space. 'The music danced and

*'This music was as far removed from
Brahms or Bruckner as Warhol's work
was from Rembrandt's The Night Watch'*

pulsed with a special life, its motoric rhythms, burbling, highly amplified figurations and mournful sustained notes booming out through the huge black windows and filling up the bleak industrial neighbourhood.' Rockwell describes spontaneous dancing in the streets as the music leaked out of those huge

windows – 'And across the street, silhouetted high up in a window, a lone saxophone player improvised a silent accompaniment like some faded postcard of 1950s Greenwich Village Bohemia. It was a good night to be in New York City.'

Five decades on from its first stirrings – and a full 50 years after a nervous Steve Reich supervised the first performance of *It's Gonna Rain* – when the unfolding story of minimalism can often feel like a done deal, those controversies are worth revisiting. History is written by the victors, and there's no doubt that the minimalist composers consider themselves to have triumphed; where the modernism of Stockhausen, Boulez and Nono had alienated genuine music-lovers, the progress and audience credibility of Western classical music had been rescued by minimalists' determination to show atonality the red card. Perched somewhere between classical respectability and mass popular culture – Glass's 1976 opera *Einstein on the Beach* cracked the Metropolitan Opera, then he collaborated with Patti Smith, David Bowie and Leonard Cohen, while Reich would get down with the kids from Radiohead – minimalism was ideally placed to deal with the challenges and responsibilities dodged by introverted, self-serving Euro-modernism.

The inner life of music, though, is hopefully more nuanced, and this official, cannily spun history of minimalism represents only a minimal part of the whole story. Minimalism

enjoys superb PR. Robert Hurwitz, President of Nonesuch Records, the record label of Glass, Reich and Adams, used the booklet-notes he wrote for his 10-disc anthology 'The John Adams Earbox' to outline how he repositioned the one-time house label of Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt and George Crumb towards a label that preached the minimalist credo. The problem with Carter's music was 'a huge gap between what the music was supposed to be saying, and my gut response to listening to it.'

In Robert Maycock's uncomfortably laudatory *Glass: A Portrait* (Sanctuary: 2002), you wait for the inevitable assault on European Modernism and, by page 60, you're rolling with the punches. Messiaen's Catholicism, apparently, gave his modernist instincts some soul (and 'Gershwin-like directness'), while the dreams of Boulez and Stockhausen 'became corrupted'. And a regrettable false dichotomy opens up, which has solidified into the dominant narrative. Last year Howard Goodall's BBC television documentary *The Story of Music* came to the same conclusion: modernism bad, minimalism good.

Hints that there might be more to minimalism than this mundane pop history came when I interviewed the pianist, composer and improviser Frederic Rzewski in 2002. During the mid-1960s, Rzewski toured with the Italian composer Sylvano Bussotti and minimalism was a key obsession: 'except the term "minimalism" hadn't yet evolved and it was simply another strand of the avant-garde. We performed music by Giuseppe Chiari, who was a master, but never became a cultural icon like Philip Glass. The success of Górecki in the early 1990s opened the door for people to appreciate music by Morton Feldman and Howard Skempton. And yet Chiari remains unfamiliar.' Rzewski concluded with the thought that Michael Nyman and Gavin Bryars became rich and famous. But what had happened to Chiari – and Thomas Schmitt, Terry Jennings and Eric Anderson? 'They were major figures involved in the minimalist movement who have since disappeared from view.'

But what hope Chiari when the official minimalist yarn doesn't know quite where to place two composers who were present right from the start as community organisers and catalysts of big ideas – Terry Riley and La Monte Young? Reich's *It's Gonna Rain* had its first airing, not in New York as is often assumed, but at the San Francisco Tape Music Center at 321 Divisadero on January 27, 1965. Reich has recalled being anxious and depressed about his piece, which he fully expected would be thoroughly disliked before disappearing without trace.

Twelve weeks earlier, on November 4, 1964, Reich had been involved in the premiere of another composition that dealt with repeating modules of melody. Terry Riley's *In C* feels today like the unruly country cousin of the minimalism that would eventually turn up in New York. Riley handed his musicians 53 melodic fragments arranged on a single sheet of paper which they worked through in sequence, repeating each module at will as they zoned inside the unfolding heterophony of sound, using their instinct to guide them towards moving forwards through the piece. Reich came up with the smart idea of having one musician set the pulse by repeating top C on a keyboard, a role he fulfilled in the first performance. Meanwhile, musicians including the saxophonist Jon Gibson, then a disciple of John Coltrane, and Pauline Oliveros (accordion) and Morton Subotnick (clarinet), who would later become known for their work with electronics, listened and felt their way through Riley's piece – ensemble music functioning in a way utterly alien to Western concert music.

But Riley, 80 this year, had no reason to organise his music after any European model. California born, a student of the

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Indian vocal master Pandit Pran Nath, an admirer of John Cage and John Coltrane, Riley's relationship to the idea of a notated score, and the sounds he wanted that score to generate, was necessarily very different. For Riley, notation was not just about reading. He expected his musicians to internalise his melodic modules to the extent that they could not only hear, but feel them. Essentially, they took ownership from Riley, *In C* building from their sensitive ensemble-listening as a network of overlapping conversations was triggered – questions and answers, no one allowed to dominate the floor or press their point of view too assertively.

Riley's point of compositional departure was his realisation that Indian music and Coltrane's modally anchored jazz, as stylistically distinct as they were, shared one common characteristic: cosmic rhythmic energy flowed over relatively static harmony. His friend La Monte Young – who as a college student had befriended Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy – became Riley's sounding board; but Young's own extraordinary path through music was already under way. Having flirted with 12-tone technique and the conceptual, anti-art message of Fluxus (including works requiring a pianist to push his instrument through a wall and, elsewhere, to step inside the genitals of a whale), in 1960 Young's *Composition 1960 Number 7* suggested a future. By instinct Young was a distiller and simplifier who had already created a proto-minimalism with his 1958 Trio for Strings, which slowed down to a crawl, and isolated, corners of 12-tone rows. But the score of *Composition 1960 Number 7* showed a B natural and an F sharp suspended on the stave, with the simple instruction: 'To be held for a very long time'.

And this is the moment, surely, that the minimalist seed was planted. That apparently simple instruction, though, was not as simple as it seemed. The perfect fifth encapsulated the most fundamental of all intervallic relationships – that between the tonic root and the dominant fifth – but how should that interval be tuned and, once sounded, what should you do next? Riley and Young came to a mutual understanding that equal-tempered tuning was an unpleasant and unnecessary evil: just intonation was their tuning system of choice and much of the music they created during this period – the drones, the leisurely repetitions, the shamanistic intensity of colliding patterns – explore Riley's idea that 'Western music is fast because it's not in tune'. *Composition 1960 Number 7* feels like the start of minimalism because all points – from Cage's 4'33", to Coltrane's modes and Indian drones – pass through. It was the brave new sound of tomorrow.

In New York, the city of Charles Mingus, Elliott Carter, Deborah Harry and Bob Dylan – who all wanted to intensify music, to pack musical structure with more event and polarities



La Monte Young's *Composition 1960 Number 7* planted the minimalist seed

'Minimalism was ideally placed to deal with the responsibilities dodged by introverted, self-serving Euro-modernism'

This performance satisfies the same constructivist, cerebral pleasures as Stockhausen's *Gruppen* or Boulez's *Structures*. Minimalism, as Rzewski implies, was a modernism too.

And what of those composers Rzewski mentioned? The neglect of Terry Jennings feels especially inexplicable and unjust. A childhood friend of La Monte Young, a Jennings piece is typically understated, serene as it plays coy games with tonality. The music of Howard Skempton and Laurence Crane is much indebted. Giuseppe Chiari, always on the conceptual margins of minimalism, kept faith in his ideas of music existing in a hinterland between sound and speech, vocal inflection being altered by carefully choreographed movements of the body.

At some point in time, the tendency to strip musical ideas back to minimal means turned into Minimalism: the genre. Reich and Glass, and later Adams, like to be liked and the backstory of awkward tuning systems and the orgiastic counterpoint of *In C* become quietly abandoned as minimalism reigns supreme. Personally, disillusionment set in when Reich's *The Four Sections* appeared on Nonesuch in 1990 and the project of transferring Reich's ideas onto an orchestral canvas (the London Symphony Orchestra under Michael Tilson Thomas) made little sense. *Drumming* and *Music for 18 Musicians* reconfigured the relationship between harmony and structure. Tiny motivic ideas were made to swim in big ponds. Suddenly a music existed that questioned the certainties of going to a concert hall to hear perfectly formed 20-minute pieces. The sound of Reich's ensemble – singers vocalising through microphones, the bebop rhythmic bounce of mallets against marimbas and glockenspiel – was lost within the weight of a mass of instruments designed to carry another sort of music.

Minimalism began to appear where you least expected it – in The Netherlands, where Louis Andriessen's music, derived independently of Reich and Glass, becomes known as 'Dutch minimalism', while 'holy minimalism', the devotional music of Tavener, Górecki and Pärt, becomes a commercial goer. We're all minimalists now.

of emotion – Steve Reich and Philip Glass were pedalling this new music that, to those looking in from the outside, fused Wagnerian length with the plainness of Eric Satie. Reich's *Four Organs* – one chord gradually increased over a 30-minute duration – caused a *Rite of Spring*-style fracas at Carnegie Hall in 1973, while Glass's first recording of *Music in Twelve Parts*, made in 1975, is a whole sound world away from slick and polished later recordings. The ensemble barely keeps to the equal-tempered straight and narrow. Saxophones and keyboards churn and wail; structural points of demarcation are pointier and brutally cut.

The pulsating tonal shimmer of John Adams's orchestral music becomes the default soundworld of a whole generation of post-minimalist composers: Joseph Schwanter, Michael Torke, Carter Pann. A minimalist orthodoxy becomes as discernable as those suffocating post-serial tendencies that Reich and Glass are said to have rebelled against in the 1960s. The next generation of minimalist composers have themselves now reached comfortable middle-age. *Bang On A Can*, which began in 1987 when three New York composers – Julia Wolfe, David Lang and Michael Gordon, then in their twenties – presented a marathon concert of new music inside a downtown art gallery in New York City that kicked off at two in the afternoon and finished 12 hours later, is the most direct descendant of the pioneering work of Reich and Glass.

Bang On A Can sounds like the name of a fabled rock album that somehow history never got around to recording. Wolfe once told me, 'Early minimalist pieces developed over a slow trajectory and I sometimes think we took that idea and condensed it, perhaps re-energising Reich and Glass's ideas about rhythm with the grooves we'd heard on Jimi Hendrix or Earth, Wind and Fire records.' But it's often forgotten that, before 'minimalism' became all invasive, 'process music' was the preferred term with which to identify the characteristic traits of Glass and Reich. *Bang On A Can* composers reinvestigated the processes of minimalism and found something fresh therein.

But minimalism has also become another way of doing music, another set of rules to be followed – a contemporary sound there for the taking. Is there another 15 minutes of fame left to be plucked from the air? Will the humble and subservient arpeggio live to fight another day? Masterworks produced during the 1960s and '70s were restorative and optimistic – the stuff of sound cloud dreams – and the composerly instinct to investigate process, to put the theoretically rigorous together with the sensuously immediate, is the overriding legacy of the minimalist ideal. The music is wonderful; the lessons just as important. ⑥

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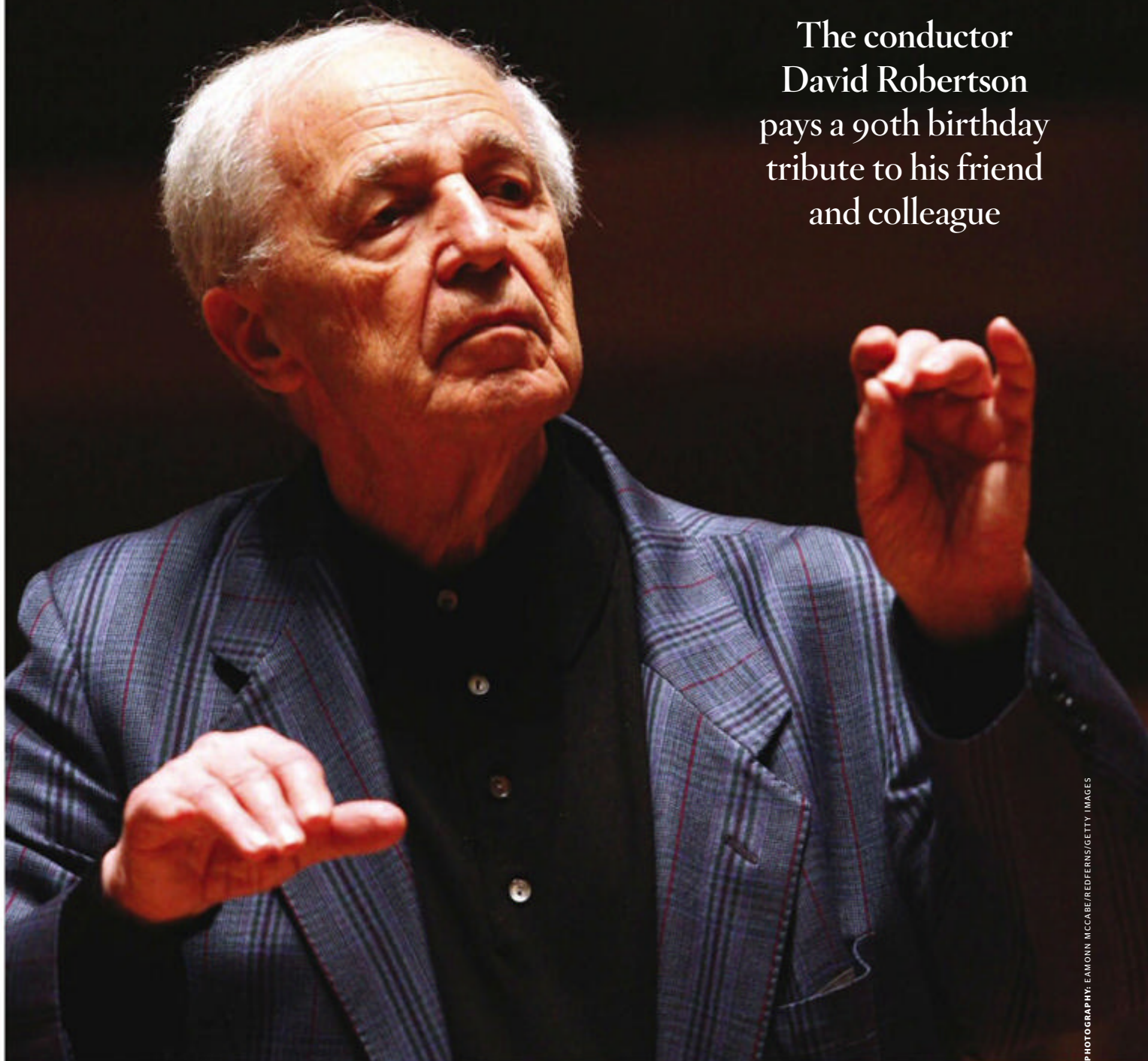
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Boulez, AN INCREDIBLE MIND

The conductor
David Robertson
pays a 90th birthday
tribute to his friend
and colleague



PHOTOGRAPHY: EAMONN MCCABE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

nce, on a plane trip to London, I was sitting next to Pierre Boulez when they handed out the landing cards. Looking at the card, I asked Pierre what he wrote in for 'occupation'. Here was a man who could reasonably claim to be a composer, a conductor, a writer, a pedagogue, a founder of institutions and, in a very tangible way, a politician. His response was typical of his humility: he said, 'I put down "Musician".'

Pierre turns 90 this March, but I became acquainted with his compositions as a teen, fascinated by the discovery of contemporary classical music. *Le marteau sans maître* seemed to be one of those masterworks on a level of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* or Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. His recordings of the 20th-century classics were revelatory in their transparency, precision and passion. When there were few institutions to help with the development of technology for musical creation, he invented and ran IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique). Knowing that the constant performance of new

'If the score is really clear in your mind, you will instinctively make the right balances' – Boulez

works at the highest level was the way to build understanding of this repertoire, he founded the Ensemble Intercontemporain. It was here that I got to work with him closely. Although I had followed a number of his rehearsals in London, I had never met the man. He saw me conduct in Paris and came back to say hello. He was disarmingly gracious and engaging. Six months later it was my great fortune to be chosen by him to succeed Peter Eötvös as the Ensemble's Musical Director.

Sitting next to him over nine years during auditions for the Ensemble (he presided over every final round) was fascinating and frequently revelatory. One had heard stories of his dismissive attitude regarding older repertoire, but I was once left speechless by his knowledge of different formal approaches in Carl Maria von Weber's four piano sonatas (full disclosure: at the time I had not known that Weber wrote piano sonatas!). His knowledge of the past has always been deep, thorough and surprisingly wide-ranging.

Pierre's ability to concentrate and focus is something inspiring and a little frightening. In rehearsals he would often approach a particularly difficult passage with the remark: 'It's very simple...' His inner teacher would then emerge and allow an individual or group to see how something that seemed well-nigh impossible a moment earlier

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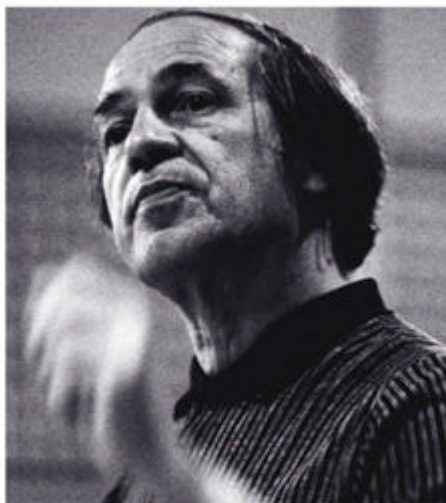
could be totally natural. I once asked how he could achieve such clarity from an orchestra. He responded that if the score is really clear in your mind, then you will instinctively make the right balances to hear what you know to be important.

His ability to display 'x-ray' hearing is the stuff of legend. Having seen him up close, it was evident that whenever he arrived at a rehearsal he was meticulously prepared. While I know that his abilities are remarkable, Pierre would be the first to say that it is mostly about knowing his scores well. Boulez always demands the highest standards of himself and expects the same of others. I think the only thing he really has no patience with is mediocrity. Around him you always want to do your best.

While conducting, he would also be gently teaching the audience. His repertoire consisted of works he loved, but at the same time, specific pieces which, if fully understood by the public, would ensure appreciation of newer works, both his colleagues' and his own, as well as how they fit into the unbroken development of musical expression. If you know and love the works of Edgar Varèse, for example, then Boulez's *Figures, Doubles, Prism* will make perfect sense. The way both Debussy and Ravel organise long-range form without resorting to traditional models based on tonality is the key to understanding Pierre's organisation in *Sur Incises* or *Répons*. If you begin to grasp how Webern can endlessly generate material from the same small cells, then you will hear how a work like *Anthèmes II* is both wonderfully varied and yet beautifully unified.

Pierre's passion for the composers he conducted was so great, his enthusiasm so enormous, that you could feel it emanate from him with the warmth and intensity of sunlight. The oboe's single high E in the final chord of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, Berg's Act 2 Trio with the Doctor, Hauptmann and Wozzeck, details of divided string orchestrations in Wagner's operas; to hear Pierre talk about such things is to know how exciting it is to be alive and how lucky you are to be a musician. This goes a long way to explaining why so many musicians revere his rehearsals and concerts.

Boulez's compositions are highly organised, brilliantly executed and attuned as few others to the beauty of sound. A work like *Eclat* seems to marvel at the very phenomenon of sound itself. I also feel that his works are overwhelming in their emotional intensity. Obviously, he takes no interest in conveying a single strong emotion in the way that Puccini



Boulez in 1981: 'disarmingly gracious and engaging'

might, where you can summarise the beauty you hear in a single word, such as 'love' or 'despair'. Boulez, rather, works in the manner of a novelist or playwright, where layers of meaning all interact so tightly that your emotion is given form by the passage itself.

It is hard to put into words the sense of transience, loss, nobility, shock, sadness and inevitability at the very end of *Rituel: In memoriam Bruno Maderna*. As the final notes of the procession recede, we are left with a sense of emptiness offset by memories of vivid, living, pulsating textures. There is nothing like it.


Once, while conducting "...explosante-fixe..." in a general rehearsal in Tokyo, I took a lot more time than Pierre did, or than I usually did for that matter,

when reaching the central part of the first movement, entitled 'Transitoire VII'. The music suddenly relaxes and there is a sense of space with shimmering textures in the flutes and strings. The string bass is playing long, slowly bowed harmonics and seems almost like someone gliding high above the earth, untethered by gravity. In the clear acoustic of the

hall it felt right to slow the tempo down to an almost glacial speed. Being a shameless romantic, I worried that I was simply being self-indulgent, taking the work to an emotional area its composer never intended. After the rehearsal I apologised for taking so slow a tempo, but he surprised me by admonishing me for not taking even more time.

It often seems when we enter the mind of an author, an artist or composer that we experience the world as they perceive it. Again on an airplane, after an overnight flight from Buenos Aires to Santiago

where I slept like a baby, I asked Pierre if he had managed to sleep at all. 'Oh, I never sleep on airplanes,' he replied, 'but as we were going over the Andes we flew through a series of clouds in the darkness. They were lit by the lights of the plane going very fast!' There was enthusiasm and excitement and wonder in his description that seemed perfectly suited to the composer of "...explosante-fixe...".

Pierre's incredible mind and its creations as expressed in thoughts, sounds and institutions have transformed the way many of us think about human expression. I guess the only thing to add to that landing card on which Pierre Boulez writes 'Musician' would be 'Amazing'. 

Pierre Boulez's 90th birthday is being marked with a 67-CD set of his Complete Columbia Recordings from Sony Classical and a 44-CD set of his recordings of 20th-century music from DG



Pierre Boulez and David Robertson prior to a pre-concert discussion at Symphony Center

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Herbert Sumsion:
Violin Sonata

Harold Darke:
Violin Sonata no.1

Richard Pantcheff:
Organ Sonata

Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin)
Duncan Honeybourne
(piano/organ)

EMR CD025



THE ENGLISH PHANTASY: Bridge, Holst, Goossens, Howells, Holbrooke and Hurlstone

The Bridge Quartet

EMR CD023



THE FIRE THAT BREAKS FROM THEE: Stanford and Milford Violin Concertos

BBC Concert Orchestra
Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin)
Owain Arwel Hughes (cond.)

Produced in association with BBC
Radio 3 and the BBC Concert Orchestra

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GRAMOPHONE *Summer* FESTIVALS 2015

The next few months offer an array of colourful festivals around Europe and North America – browse our listings and take a look at our special focus on some of the more spectacular settings

UK FESTIVALS

Aldeburgh Festival

June 12-28

Once more under the artistic direction of pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard, the season opens with the premiere of Sir Harrison Birtwistle's chamber opera, *The Cure*, in a double-bill with his 2009 one-acter, *The Corridor*, performed by London Sinfonietta. The Artist-in-Residence will be George Benjamin who appears as conductor, pianist and composer. The Bach-themed middle weekend sees a three-day visit from Sir John Eliot Gardiner with his Monteverdi Choir. Other residents include the Mahler CO, the Doric Quartet, Jean-Guihen Queyras and Andreas Scholl. Concert presentation also gets played with, including Tal Rosner's new video accompaniment to some of Britten's best-loved pieces, and Multi-Story, bringing live orchestral music to the centre of Ipswich.

aldeburgh.co.uk

Barnes Music Festival

March 14-29

This year's theme is 'Magna Carta, Music & Freedom', celebrating the

800th anniversary of the Magna Carta and its links with Barnes. There's a morning 'Come & Sing' conducted by Ralph Alwood and bolstered by the Rodolfus Choir and Il Suono, including music by Rutter, Howells, Parry and Purcell. Other highlights include Martin Neary conducting Bach's *St John Passion* and an evening of 'Music at the Court of Bad King John' with Misericordia who will also be running a medieval family workshop. Purcell's *King Arthur* will also be performed, with narration by Gyles Brandreth and Patricia Hodge.

barnesmusicfestival.com

BBC Proms

17 July - 12 September

The opening weekend will include two concerts celebrating the culmination of the BBC's Ten Pieces initiative for primary schools. These will include the original 10 pieces of music, such as John Adams's *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, as well as a range of children's creative responses. The rest of the season will be announced on April 23.

bbc.co.uk/proms

Beverley and East Riding Early Music Festival

May 20-24

It's an anniversaries-packed festival this year, starting off with the 1215 sealing of the Magna Carta. This will be marked in a concert by Early Music's 'bit of rough', Joglaresa, in a programme called *Robbers, Rebels and Royals*. Another highlight will be The Tallis Scholars in a programme which combines the music of 500th-anniversary composer John Sheppard, with that of Arvo Pärt, whose 80th birthday is this year.

ncem.co.uk/bemf

Branscombe Festival

July 24-26

Returning for its third year, this festival, founded by Ian Rosenblatt and curated by him along with pianist Iain Burnside and BBC Radio 3 broadcaster Petroc Trelawny, is set in the beautiful Devonshire village of Branscombe. Artists appearing include the tenor Francesco Meli performing with soprano Angel Blue, soprano Susan Bullock, the Sacconi Quartet, the 4-MALITY percussion quartet, the Leo Green Experience

and Soul singer Danny Toeman. The Band of the Royal Marines will perform a free concert on Branscombe beach on July 26.

branscombefestival.co.uk

Brighton Early Music Festival

October 23 - November 8

The festival takes place in a variety of venues across Brighton and Hove, and this year its theme is Women. Highlights include the festival's patron, Dame Emma Kirkby, alongside lutenist Jakob Lindberg in a programme featuring women in mythology. Another highlight will be a screening of Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1928 classic silent film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, accompanied by medieval music performed live by The Orlando Consort. The festival will also stage the first opera written by a woman composer, Francesca Caccini's 1625 *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'Isola d'Alcina*.

bremf.org.uk

Brighton Festival

May 2-24

The largest and most established multi-arts festival in England will be

SPECTACULAR LOCATION... *Bath*

Bath International Music Festival

May 15-26

Pianist Steven Osborne is the festival's Artist-in-Residence. He will play three concerts, performing repertoire including Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant Jésus*, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and a Brahms programme together with clarinettist Jean Johnson and cellist Philip Higham. Other highlights include John Butt performing Bach's *Goldberg Variations* on the harpsichord, and directing another all-Bach concert with the Dunedin Consort. Events in the abbey include a recital by organist Thomas Trotter, as well as early music vocal ensemble Stile Antico performing a programme built around Byrd's five-part Mass. There will also be a special event with Will Gregory, co-founder of Goldfrapp. bathfestivals.org.uk/music



guest-directed this year by the author Ali Smith. Classical highlights include a festival commission, *Being Both*. Directed by Susannah Waters, this theatrical production will explore and challenge the experience and perception of gender through the vocal music of Handel, performed by Alice Coote and The English Concert, conducted by Harry Bicket. Another noteworthy event will be the UK premiere of *The Lads in Their Hundreds*, a tribute to the soldiers of the Great War by the French theatre group Comédie de Picardie. This will feature the French actor, Tchéky Karyo, performing 15 of France's finest war poems, interspersed with songs by Ivor Gurney and George Butterworth from tenor Edmund Hastings. brightonfestival.org

Bristol Proms

July 27 - August 1

Hosted by Bristol Old Vic, the idea is to present world-class performances with the spontaneous informality of 18th-century concert-going. A particular hallmark of the festival is its theatrical staging and its use of innovative technology from Bristol's famous digital community. This year's festival includes performances from violinist Daniel Hope and guitarist Miloš Karadaglić. bristololdvic.org.uk/bristolproms

Buckingham Summer Festival

July 4-11

Among the highlights this year are The Maurizi Ensemble and a recital by, collectively, mezzo Sophie Grech, trumpeter Crispin Steele-Perkins and pianist Leslie Pearson. The festival opens and closes in the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul in the centre of Buckingham,

and this year's closing gala concert will feature the Orchestra of Stowe Opera performing Brahms's First Piano Concerto (with Craig Greene) and Saint-Saëns's *Organ Symphony*. buckinghamsummerfestival.org

Bury St Edmunds Festival

May 15-24

The 30th year of Bury Festival will feature a wide range of music, film, dance, theatre, comedy, walks and exhibitions. Kicking off the festival will be Cuban violinist Omar Puente, performing at the Apex together with his big band, Raíces Cubanas. Other guest artists include Evelyn Glennie, The Tallis Scholars, jazz singer Clare Teal and food writer Jay Rayner, who happens to be a fine jazz pianist. Art forms will be mixed, such as Gandini Juggling performing alongside dancers from the Royal Ballet, choral group the Orlando Consort performing medieval music live to the silent film, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, and the Aurora Orchestra mixing Rameau and Paganini with swing music. buryfestival.co.uk

Buxton Festival

July 10-26

The Peak District festival offers 16 days of opera, music and literature. It's one of the only festivals to specialise in producing rarely performed operas by major composers, which are presented in the Matcham-designed Buxton Opera House. This years operas are Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* directed by Elijah Moshinsky, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and a concert performance of Charpentier's *Louise*. The festival also features more than 100 concerts from musicians including pianist Stephen Hough,

the English Chamber Orchestra and the Fitzwilliam Quartet. The literary series running alongside the musical events will explore topics including the Magna Carta, the Battle of Waterloo, Alice in Wonderland and Prince Harry, with speakers including Louis de Bernière, Helen Castor and Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor. buxtonfestival.co.uk

Cambridge Summer Music Festival

July 17 - August 1

This annual festival takes place in some of the city's most historic buildings. This year, the festival theme is 'pairings', including the Wiham Quartet joining forces with the Allegri Quartet for Mendelssohn's Octet. King's College Chapel will host several noteworthy events, such as a performance of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, and the first visit to the UK of the Deutsche Philharmonie Merck, performing repertoire by Glinka, Tchaikovsky and Brahms. An all-day celebration of composer John Rutter's 70th birthday will include Creative Youth performing his *The Piper of Hamelin*. cambridgesummermusic.com

Carducci Festival

May 29-31

Run by the Carducci Quartet, this festival is based in Highnam, near Gloucester, which is the birthplace of composer Sir Hubert Parry. Concerts are spread between Holy Innocents Church, which was built and decorated by Parry's father, and Highnam Court, the Parry family seat. Guest artists this year include cellist Guy Johnston, guitarist Craig Ogden, and American soprano Katharine Dain performing with pianist Julius Drake. Two concerts will also showcase the Carducci Quartet themselves: a late-night recital of Shostakovich quartets, and a programme in which they join the up-and-coming Cavaleri Quartet for Mendelssohn's Octet. carducciquartet.com

Cheltenham Music Festival

June 30 - July 11

Paris is a central theme this year, covered by events such as a screening of the 1928 silent film *Jeanne d'Arc*, accompanied by the Orlando Consort. Composer Eric Whitacre is one of the featured artists, performing with the Eric Whitacre Singers and also conducting an experiment to see what effects performing and listening to music have on the body. This year's chamber series in

the Pittville Pump Room includes pianists Marc-André Hamelin and Gabriela Montero, and the New Zealand Quartet with Julian Bliss. There are 10 premieres, including a deconstruction of 1970s disco music by Graham Fitkin. The Proms series, launched last year, continues in the Town Hall. Highlights include The King's Singers celebrating the 150th anniversary of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and the CBSO performing Haydn, Mozart and Rachmaninov with Steven Osborne and conductor Edward Gardner. cheltenhamfestivals.com/music

Chichester Festival

June 13 - July 12

This is one of the largest festivals in the south, with more than 200 events over a month. The festival opens this year with the Bournemouth SO in Chichester Cathedral, performing a programme that includes Brahms's Symphony No 4 and Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. The Hanover Band lunchtime series in St John's Chapel includes Mendelssohn's Octet, plus works by Schubert, Reicha and Spohr. Other highlights include the Chichester Singers performing Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* and Berlioz's *Te Deum* in the cathedral. festivalofchichester.co.uk

Chipping Campden Music Festival

May 10-23

Two weeks of music in the Cotswold village's St James's Church! Pianist Paul Lewis returns alongside festival debuts this year by soprano Carolyn Sampson and pianist Joseph Middleton presenting a programme of songs entitled 'Fleurs'. Also, pianist Marc-André Hamelin performs with the Takács Quartet. The success of the masterclass morning last year has led to a vocal class this year, tutored by David Pollard. Violinist Henning Kraggerud will also be appearing for the first time, performing Schubert trios with Imogen Cooper and Adrian Brendel. Another highlight will be The English Concert directed by Harry Bicket. campdenmusicfestival.co.uk

City of London Festival

June 22-July 20

Highlights of the classical programme, set in the City's churches and livery halls, include two symphonic concerts in St Paul's Cathedral, the LSO and Chorus performing Haydn's *The Creation*, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment performing Monteverdi's *Vespers*. This year

the festival celebrates Singapore through a multi-arts series, including a performance from the T'ang Quartet and pianist Melvyn Tan. The festival's 'Choral Capital' initiative will return with participatory and performance-led choral events. The festival's fleet of Street Guitars sheltered in upturned boats will reappear throughout the Square Mile for City workers, visitors and residents alike to come and strum. The festivities will close with the annual Children's Parade. colf.org

Corbridge Chamber Music Festival

August 7-9
Hosted and directed by the Gould Piano Trio and clarinettist Robert Plane, they are joined this year by David Adams (violin/viola), Tom Dunn (viola), Army Harman (bassoon), Philippe Schwartz (trumpet) and Tyler Shepherd (double bass) for a weekend of concerts in this picturesque Northumberland village. Repertoire includes Brahms's Piano Trio Op 101, Saint-Saëns's Septet, Martinu's *Revue de cuisine*, and a Beethoven concert of Opp 95-7. There will also be an illustrated talk on Brahms's late clarinet works. corbridgefestival.co.uk

The Cottier Chamber Project

June 5-26
The Cottier Chamber Project began in 2011 and brings top-quality professional chamber music to Glasgow's West End. The host group this year is chamber ensemble Daniel's Beard. The main evening series is made up of hour-long performances, allowing audiences to create their own programmes, and perhaps fit a meal in too. Highlights include Scottish Chamber Orchestra soloists performing Webern's reduction of Schoenberg Chamber Symphony No 1, a concert in which BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist Alec Frank-Gemmill and friends perform music for horn quartet and male voices, including the world premiere of a new work by Volker David Kirchner. There is also a free Lunchtime Lieder series. cottierchamberproject.com

The Cumnock Tryst

October 1-4
James MacMillan's new festival returns for its second year, bringing a wealth of music and artists to the composer's small East Ayrshire hometown of Cumnock. Performances will take place at

many of the same venues as last year, such as the Dumfries Arms Hotel where, once again, the Festival Club will come alive again each night. Part of the festival's *raison d'être* is to draw local choral and brass band traditions together, and a particular highlight of this side of the events will be the first performance by a new Festival Chorus, conducted by Eamonn Dougan from The Sixteen. thecumnocktryst.com

Dorset Opera Festival

July 21-25
Based at Bryanston School, the opera festival this year presents Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* for the first time, conducted by Jeremy Carnall. The festival's second production is Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*, conducted by Nicolas Mansfield and featuring participants from the popular Summer School. dorsetopera.com

East Neuk Festival

June 27 - July 5
Following on from its 10th anniversary last year, this Fife-based festival grows from five to nine days. The 2015 music programme is curated around the theme of 'Strings Across the Centuries'. For instance, the third concert in this series connects Bach's cello suites, played by Philip Higham, with Scottish tunes from the same period played by fiddler Duncan Chisholm. Other highlights include a world premiere of a work by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer John Luther Adams: *From a Distance*, performed in the grounds of the Cambo Estate. The Dunedin Consort will perform a programme focused on Bach and Handel in Cambo's potato barn under the direction of John Butt. eastneukfestival.com

Edinburgh International Festival

August 7-31
2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the Edinburgh Festival Chorus, so the Usher Hall will be playing host to great choral works including a rare performance of Sibelius's *Kullervo* and Berlioz's epic *Grande messe des morts*. Scottish artists play a central role, including the BBC Scottish SO, RSNO, SCO, James MacMillan, Nicola Benedetti, and percussionist Colin Currie in his festival debut. Lang Lang and Anne-Sophie Mutter will also be appearing for the first time. Visiting ensembles include the San Francisco SO, the Oslo PO, the

SPECTACULAR LOCATION... *Peak District National Park*

Bradfield Festival of Music

June 20-27
Bradfield is in the Peak District National Park, and the festival's concerts take place within its medieval,



Grade 1-listed Parish Church of St Nicholas, which also happens to boast excellent acoustics. Onyx Brass open this year's festival. Other highlights include 4Girls4 Harps with 2010 BBC Chorister of the Year Ella Taylor, violinist Jennifer Pike accompanied by her father, Jeremy Pike, the Brodsky Quartet appearing at the festival for the first time, and pianist Rebeca Omordia performing with saxophonist Amy Dickson. The festival is rounded off by a concert by Cantamus. bradfieldfestivalofmusic.co.uk

Budapest Festival Orchestra and Le Concert Spirituel. This year's operas include the world premiere of Donnacha Dennehy's *The Last Hotel*. elf.co.uk

English Haydn Festival

June 3-7
For its 22nd year, this Shropshire-based festival welcomes the Christophe Coin Trio, the Sacconi and Salomon String Quartets and the English Haydn Ensemble. The theme for 2015 is 'Haydn & the Natural World', culminating in a performance of *The Seasons*. haydn.org.uk

English Music Festival

May 22-25
Expect early and contemporary music and wartime dance-band pieces through to sacred music and full orchestral concerts. The opening concert will feature the world premiere of George Butterworth's substantial *Fantasia for Orchestra*, alongside Gerald Finzi's Cello Concerto with Raphael Wallfisch as the soloist. Other highlights include Roderick Williams starring in a final-night concert of Butterworth, Holst and Boughton with the Symphonia Academica, and the Elysian Singers singing sacred music at Dorchester Abbey. englishmusicfestival.org.uk

Garsington Opera

June 5 - July 26
Based at the Wormsley Estate in the Chiltern Hills, the festival boasts three new operatic productions this year. First, Strauss's *Intermezzo*, starring baritone Mark Stone and soprano Kate Valentine; also, Britten's *Death in Venice*, which will be conducted by Stuart Bedford,

who conducted the work's premiere 40 years ago; and finally, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, starring Lesley Garrett as Despina. The season will also include the first-ever partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company, an abridged version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed with Mendelssohn's incidental music. garsingtonopera.org

Glyndebourne

May 21 - August 30
The 2015 festival opens with the first professionally staged UK performance of Donizetti's *Poliuto*, conducted by Enrique Mazzola with tenor Michael Fabiano in the title-role, alongside soprano Ana María Martínez. There are also new productions of Handel's *Saul*, directed by Barrie Kosky and starring Christopher Purves in the title-role, and Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, directed by David McVicar and conducted by Glyndebourne's Music Director Robin Ticciati. Revivals include Laurent Pelly's 2012 Ravel double-bill of *L'heure espagnole* and *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Danielle de Niese starring in both), Fiona Shaw's 2013 Glyndebourne-On-Tour production of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, and David McVicar's 2002 production of *Carmen*. Glyndebourne will also present the world premiere of a studio opera on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by Glyndebourne's Young Composer-in-Residence, Luke Styles. glyndebourne.com

Grange Park Opera

June 4 - July 18
Sited just outside Winchester, this is a country house opera festival which mirrors Glyndebourne in its

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LOVE

Ex Cathedra

DEATH

Jacquet de La Guerre

ADORATION

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

INTENSITY

Rameau

Image

Jan de Bisschop,
Three seated women
(detail), etching. 1668–71.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam,
M.E. van den Brink
Bequest, Velp.



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interval black-tie picnicking tradition, but has a classy quirkiness all of its own thanks to its Raj-style picnicking tents set within the grounds of a semi-ruined neo-classical mansion. The operas themselves take place in the 2002-built theatre housed within the 19th-century orangery. This year's season kicks off with Jerry Bock's *Fiddler on the Roof*, with Bryn Terfel in the lead role of Tevye and the BBC Concert Orchestra. The other operas are Puccini's *La bohème* directed by Stephen Medcalf, Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.
grangeparkopera.co.uk

Gregynog Festival

June 12-28

The theme of this Welsh borders festival is Revolution, and the season draws together several strands connecting France, Gregynog and Wales. For instance, it was Monmouth-born King Henry V who was the victor at Agincourt in 1415, and at Waterloo in 1815 'the Welsh stood like a rock and saw off the French'. Performers of early music include pianist Kristian Bezuidenhout. Modern offerings will be presented by the likes of the Escher Quartet and pianist Anne Queffelec. Alongside the music, expect art and craft, dance, film, history and literature.
gregynogfestival.org

Henley Festival

July 8-12

Set on the banks of the River Thames, and even on the Thames itself thanks to the floating stage, the Henley Festival combines music with street theatre, comedy and fireworks. Headlining the festival this year is the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Troy Miller and Fabio D'Andrea, performing a 'Gershwin Spectacular' that will include singer Laura Mvula, trumpeter Alison Balsom and pianist Ji Liu.
henley-festival.co.uk

Holt Festival

July 19-26

Now in its seventh year, the festival brings international music, drama, visual art, dance comedy and kids' shows to venues across the historic North Norfolk town. Classical highlights include guitarist Mariano Mangas in a rare UK appearance, the Kosmos Ensemble, and an afternoon in which composer and broadcaster Michael Berkeley will be joined by neurologist Professor Michael Trimble to look at how composers

create emotion. Non-classical highlights include BBC TV journalist Michael Buerk, former MI5 Director General and novelist Dame Stella Rimington, and music from folk-rock pioneers Steeleye Span.
holtfestival.org

Iford Arts

June 6 - August 8

Iford Arts Festival takes place in the award-winning Peto Garden of Iford Manor, on the banks of the River Frome near Bath. Opera performances are staged in the round and are all sung in English. There are also informal free-flowing prom concerts that take in the whole garden, as well as seated cloister concerts. All events invite guests to arrive early with a picnic. This year, the operas include a new Iford Arts production of Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* directed by Timothy Nelson, Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Handel's *Agrippina*.
ifordarts.org.uk

It's All About Piano

March 27-29

Presented by the Institut français in London's South Kensington, it's not hard to guess the focus of this festival. Amongst the events are a masterclass led by Angela Hewitt, recitals from François-Frédéric Guy and Peter Donohoe, and the London premiere of Messiaen's *La fauvette passerinette*, performed by Peter Hill who discovered the work in 2012.
institutfrancais.org.uk/
itsallaboutpiano

Lammermuir Festival

September 11-20

'Beautiful music in beautiful places' is the enticing strapline of this East Lothian festival. The music of Bach and Rachmaninov features strongly this year, the former being championed by the Dunedin Consort, who present a special event based on the famous musical evenings at Zimmermann's coffee house in Leipzig where Bach and friends performed and indulged in philosophical debate. Artists-in-Residence this year are the Michelangelo Quartet, its members performing both as a quartet and as soloists in concerts with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and National Girls Choir of Scotland.
lammermuirfestival.co.uk

Leamington Music Festival

May 1-5

Leamington Spa's Royal Pump

Rooms are the venue for this festival which opens and closes with string quartets playing Mozart, Haydn, Shostakovich, Schubert and Brahms; first, the Fitzwilliam Quartet joined by pianist Anna Tilbrook, and then the Munich-based Henschel Quartet joined by clarinetist Michael Collins. Other highlights include two concerts from Raphael Wallfisch's recently formed Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch, in which they will play the three Brahms piano trios, and Schubert's Trio D898.
leamingtonmusic.org

Leicester International Music Festival

September 17-19

Beethoven and the French Connection is the theme of the festival's chamber repertoire in 2015. Performers include the festival's Artistic Director Nicholas Daniel (oboe), Marina Chiche and Giovanni Guzzo (violins), Philip Dukes (viola), Guy Johnston (cello) and pianists Katya Apekisheva, Charles Owen and Tom Poster. The repertoire embraces Beethoven and the French composers he influenced, including Milhaud, Franck, and Fauré.
musicfestival.co.uk

Lichfield Festival

July 3-12

This year, the programme of this multi-arts festival is centred around the theme of 'Landscapes & Journeys', supported by residencies from the Sacconi Quartet and composer David Matthews. Among the highlights will be the CBSO performing Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony in Lichfield Cathedral, along with Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with Jennifer Pike, and the world premiere of David Matthews's *Toward Sunrise*. The Lichfield Garrick Theatre is another festival venue, and it will play host to author Michael Morpurgo, actress Alison Reid, violinist Daniel Pioro and The Storyteller's Ensemble, as they bring to life Morpurgo's novel *The Mozart Question*.
lichfieldfestival.org

London Festival of Baroque Music

May 15-19

Known until this year as the Lufthansa Festival of Baroque, the festival's concerts take place in St John's Smith Square, the Wallace Collection and Westminster Abbey. The theme for 2015 is 'Women in Baroque Music', and the opening concert will feature the Bach Collegium Japan under Masaaki

Suzuki, in an evening of JS Bach with Czech soprano Hana Blažiková. Other highlights include music by Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre, born 350 years ago and considered to be the first-ever professional female composer. There will also be rarely heard works by composers Barbara Strozzi and Francesca Caccini. The French harpsichordist Béatrice Martin will be performing, as will the all-female choir, Schola Pietatis Antonio Vivaldi. The festival will close with a performance of Monteverdi's *Vespers* - honouring the Virgin Mary - in Westminster Abbey.
lfbm.org.uk

Longborough Festival Opera

June 12 - July 26

A country house opera festival with a special commitment to the music of Wagner. Performances here feel intimate, thanks to an auditorium seating just under 500. A new production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, directed by Carmen Jakobi and conducted by Music Director Anthony Negus, opens the festival. The other main operas this year are Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and a new staging of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. The Young Artist Production will be Handel's *Xerxes*.
lfo.org.uk

Ludlow English Song Weekend

May 29-31

Set in historic Ludlow, this festival, under Artistic Director Iain Burnside, celebrates the British song tradition through performances by both emerging and established artists, while also looking to the future by commissioning new music. The concerts sit within a programme that also features talks and film screenings, plus a competition for young composers. Roderick Williams will open the weekend this year, with a performance of Finzi's *Before and After Summer*, alongside songs by Vaughan Williams and Robert Saxton. Saturday evening's gala performance will be a celebration of AE Houseman, in words and music, plus *Zodiack*, a new commission from Judith Bingham.
ludlowenglishsongweekend.com

Mendelssohn on Mull Festival

June 29 - July 4

The idea behind this Scottish chamber music festival is to bring new-generation musicians into contact with seasoned professional mentors, far from the stresses of the professional music circuit. They

workshop music, then perform it in a series of free concerts in venues across Mull, Iona and in Oban. This year's festival dates fall close to the centenary of the Armenian Genocide (April 24), so several Armenian pieces are being included in the programme, including music by the priest Komitas, who notated and transcribed the folk songs of this Christian culture during the years of the genocide so they wouldn't be lost. Four of these slow songs will be played by Levon Chilingirian, founder and first violinist of the Chilingirian Quartet, and his group at Iona Abbey, along with a cello quintet by fellow Armenian Tigran Mansourian, which was composed especially for the Chilingirian Quartet.

mendelssohnonmull.com

Milton Abbey International Music Festival

July 27 - August 1

Hosted by vocal group Voces8, the festival presents a week of performances in Dorset's beautiful 12th-century Milton Abbey, running in tandem with a musical summer school. Highlights include Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort performing works by Purcell and Handel with Voces8 and the Festival Chorus, and tenor Paul Phoenix in a recital with lutenist Sam Chapman. Voces8 themselves will give the festival's opening performance.

eventsatmiltonabbey.co.uk/milton-abbey-international-music-festival

Music at Paxton

July 17-26

Ten days of chamber music in the intimate surroundings of the Picture Gallery at Paxton House, Berwick-upon-Tweed, in the Scottish Borders. The festival celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, and highlights include pianist Benjamin Grosvenor performing Ravel's *Tombeau de Couperin* in a programme that also includes Mendelssohn and Chopin; also, Natalie Clein (cello) and Håvard Gimse (piano) in a recital of works by Britten, Kurtág and Debussy. The Signum Quartet will be playing Beethoven's Quartet Op 130 along with the *Grosse Fuge*, and Steven Osborne (piano) and Jean Johnson (clarinet) will perform a recital together that will include Brahms's Clarinet Sonata in E flat.

musicatpaxton.co.uk

Music in the Round - May Festival of Chamber Music

May 8-16

Sheffield's festival of chamber music celebrates the twin themes of youth

and experience this year. Resident ensemble, Ensemble 360, will be at the heart of the festival as ever, with one of their many performances being the world premiere of a commission from composer Elizabeth Ogonek. Other highlights include the UK premiere of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's *Stormwatch*, *Stormfall*, Simon Callow presenting a grand cultural tour around Europe with the young Felix Mendelssohn, and Richard Wilson narrating *Peter and the Wolf*. Late-night music will be provided by the Mischa Macpherson Trio, winners of the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award.

musicintheround.co.uk

Newbury Spring Festival

May 9-23

A fortnight of concerts in venues in and around Newbury, taking in beautiful rural villages and local stately homes including Englefield House and Highclere Castle (better known as Downton Abbey). Ensembles making their Festival debuts include the BBC Symphony Orchestra with violinist Valeriy Sokolov under Edward Gardner, and Andrzej Szadejko with his Goldberg Baroque Ensemble; also, the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the festival's own chorus. Pianist Peter Donohoe will also be making his festival debut, as will the Irish Ambassador Daniel Mulhall who will talk about his compatriot WB Yeats in the poet's 150th anniversary year.

newburyspringfestival.org.uk

Norfolk and Norwich Festival

May 8-24

A sizeable proportion of the music programme this year has a focus on the works of Felix Mendelssohn, including bass Sir John Tomlinson joining the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and the Festival Chorus for a performance of *Elijah*. A selection of Mendelssohn's chamber works will be presented by Gateshead-based Northern Chords Ensemble in a series of three intimate concerts at Norwich's Octagon Chapel. Other artists this year, performing non-Mendelssohn repertoire, include Austrian pianist Ingolf Wunder, The Tallis Scholars and the Aurora Orchestra.

nffestival.org.uk

North Norfolk Festival

August 12-22

The opening evening of the festival this year begins with the Marmen Quartet performing Brahms's String Quartet in A minor and Bartók's

String Quartet No 4. This is followed by Yevgeny Sudbin performing a piano recital that will include Beethoven's six Bagatelles Op 126, along with works by Scriabin, Chopin and Haydn. Other performers this year include the Navarra Quartet, the Leonore Trio and the Arcadia Quartet.

northnorfolkmusicfestival.com

North York Moors Chamber Music Festival

August 16-29

Cellist Jamie Walton is the Artistic Director of this increasingly successful festival, which operates under a slightly unusual system whereby a pool of musicians interchange with each work. In effect, this puts the focus on the music and not necessarily who is playing it, although the musicians are all international artists. This year the Cremona Quartet are joining the festival for a concert that will include Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* Quartet. The same concert will feature the world premiere of a new work by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, in which Jamie Walton will be performing. Visiting artists include violinists Priya Mitchell and Hugo Ticiatti, and Matthew Wadsworth performing music by Lully and Visée on the theorbo.

northyorkmoorsfestival.com

Opera Holland Park

June 2 - August 1

The festival hosts five new productions, accompanied as usual by the City of London Sinfonia in the handsome tented theatre. The season opens with Puccini's *Il trittico*, two panels of which - *Suor Angelica* and *Il tabarro* - will be new productions, with *Gianni Schicchi* a revival of the festival's 2012 production. The festival will also feature the first professional London performance of Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, new productions of Verdi's *Aida* and Delibes's *Lakmé*, and revivals of Montemezzi's *L'amore dei tre re* and Will Todd's family opera, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

operahollandpark.com

Oundle International Festival

July 10-18

Stile Antico perform music from the Tudor Partbooks, including works by Tallis, Byrd and Taverner, along with organ improvisation on Partbook themes; the Partbooks were copied locally in Tudor times by John Sadler. Youth is covered in style by, among others, the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. There's also

a vocal strand: those who want to get involved can go to a choral workshop day, followed by a scratch performance of Vaughan Williams's *Dona Nobis Pacem*.

oundlefestival.org.uk

Oxford Lieder Festival

October 16-31

The opening recital will be given by mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly and pianist Graham Johnson, who will perform Schubert, Brahms and Mendelssohn. Other festival highlights include mezzo Katarina Karnéus and bass Neal Davies accompanied by Festival Director Sholto Kynoch, in an evening devoted to settings of Goethe. Another event will be devoted to Mary Stuart, with music by Schumann, plus new works by Judith Bingham, Eddie McGuire and Dee Isaacs. Imogen Cooper will be Artist-in-Residence, giving recitals with Wolfgang Holzmair and Henk Neven, as well as a solo performance and masterclasses.

oxfordlieder.co.uk

Oxford May Festival

April 29 - May 4

A festival whose programmes aim to combine science with world-class concerts, under the artistic direction of violinist Jack Liebeck and administration of renowned particle physicist Professor Brian Foster. Highlights this year include a talk by Professor Brian Cox on the nature of time, followed by a performance of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* by Trio Dali with clarinettist Paul Dean; also, a lecture on the details and legacy of Borodin's career as a researcher and professor of chemistry, followed by a concert to include his String Sextet, with Jack Liebeck among the performers.

oxfordmaymusic.co.uk

Oxford Philomusica Piano Festival

July 26 - August 3

Concert highlights include the festival's President Sir Andrés Schiff giving two fortepiano recitals of Schubert works in the Holywell Music Room, Europe's oldest concert hall, and Ivo Pogorelich giving a recital in the Sheldonian Theatre. The legendary Menahem Pressler will join host orchestra Oxford Philomusica while Patron Alfred Brendel gives a rare lecture on Schubert's last piano sonatas. Barry Douglas, Mari Kodama, Yoheved Kaplinsky, Byron Janis, Ferenc Rados and Leon McCawley

are also performing at the festival.
oxfordphil.com/piano-festival

Peasmarsh Chamber Music Festival

June 25-28

Artistic Directors violinist Anthony Marwood and cellist Richard Lester bring together friends and colleagues for a long weekend of music-making focused on the East Sussex Church of St Peter and St Paul, Peasmarsh. Among them, Huw Watkins appears as both pianist and composer. The London Mozart Players, conducted by Jaime Martin, give the sole concert in St Mary's in Rye: music by Watkins, Schumann, Dvořák and Beethoven (with Marwood and Lester as soloists). The festival includes a Saturday late-night performance of Haydn's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* interspersed with poetry by Mark Shand and read by Walter van Dyk. peasmarshfestival.co.uk

Penarth Chamber Music Festival

July 10-12

Set in the art deco Penarth Pier Pavillion, the festival opens this year with the Gould Piano Trio performing Schubert and Brahms (with viola player David Adams). The second evening features a performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, together with music from the same period, with the Ravel Piano Trio amongst the performers. The weekend will close with Beethoven. penarthpavillion.co.uk

Perth Festival of the Arts

May 21-31

The festival's opening night features English Touring Opera with a new production of Puccini's *La bohème* at Perth Concert Hall. Further festival opera will be provided by Scottish Opera, who will be bringing their trailer tour to perform free shows. Another highlight will be trumpeter Tine Thing Helseth playing the Hummel Trumpet Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic. The closing concert will star the Royal Marines Band joined by musicians from Portsmouth and Scotland. perthfestival.co.uk

Plush Festival

June 6 - August 29

Every summer the Dorset village of Plush hosts concerts of classical, contemporary and jazz. The festival is under the artistic direction of cellist Adrian Brendel, and performances take place in St John the Baptist. To celebrate

the festival's 20th anniversary, Sir András Schiff gives the annual piano recital. Another highlight will be a concert marking Scriabin's 100th anniversary, with Adrian Brendel, Imogen Cooper and Tim Horton. plushfestival.com

Portsmouth Festivities

June 19-28

Two interesting events are, firstly, the Portsmouth Festival Choir performing a semi-staged period-instrument performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, preceded by songs and instrumental fantasias by Purcell. Secondly, the Southern Countertenors Festival features an ensemble comprising countertenor lay clerks and choral scholars from Portsmouth Anglican Cathedral performing both traditional repertoire and new commissions. The Swingle Singers will also visit. portsmouthfestivities.co.uk

Presteigne Festival

August 27 - September 1

The 150th anniversaries of Nielsen and Sibelius will be celebrated with performances of their orchestral, chamber and vocal music, complemented by works by Einojuhani Rautavaara and Pēteris Vasks. Matthew Taylor, a great admirer of all things Sibelian, is Composer-in-Residence. New commissions include a concerto for piano and chamber orchestra from David Knotts, a string quartet from Joseph Phibbs, a set of three songs from Cecilia McDowall, and a solo violin piece from Michael Small. The festival also continues the relationship with Nova Music Opera, who will bring together contemporary chamber operas from Charlotte Bray and Thomas Hyde. presteignefestival.com

Proms at St Jude's

June 20-28

A week of concerts in the acoustically brilliant St Jude's Church, in North London's Hampstead Garden Suburb. The 150th anniversary of the publication of *Alice in Wonderland* will be celebrated in style with the London premiere of *The Wonderland Project*, a family show devised and performed by pianist Ashley Wass and violinist Matthew Trusler. It consists of 12 short pieces by composers from the fields of chamber music to film to rock, including Roxanna Panufnik, Stephen Hough and Carl Davis, and is scripted by Louis de Bernières.

SPECTACULAR LOCATION... *Lake District*

Lake District Summer Music International Festival

August 1-14

The festival is increasing its geographical spread from Kendal, Ambleside and Windermere, to take in Ulverston and Grange-over-Sands in the south-west corner of Cumbria. Among the highlights will be the world premiere of a newly commissioned work for the Apollo Saxophone Quartet. The various war-themed anniversaries - the First World War centenary, Second World War's 70th, the Waterloo bicentenary and the Hundred Years' War - will also be marked with, for example, the premiere of a work for mezzo and percussion ensemble setting texts by three female First World War poets from France, Germany and Ireland. Visiting international performers and tutors will be Germany's Kuss Quartet, Italy's Trio di Parma, cellist Gregor Horsch from the Netherlands, and Ukrainian pianist, Vadym Kholodenko. ldsm.org.uk



The Brodsky Quartet and violinist Charlie Siem also visit. promsatsjjudes.org.uk

Ryedale Festival

July 17 - August 2

The 2015 festival has an Austro-Hungarian flavour, with a focus on the music of Bartók, including a complete cycle of his string quartets alongside Haydn's Op 76. There will also be a new production of Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, and a celebration of Brahms's Hungarian-inspired works. A 100th anniversary performance by Ex Cathedra of Rachmaninov's 'All-Night Vigil' at Ampleforth Abbey introduces another theme of 'night music', continuing with three candle-lit concerts featuring Chopin's Nocturnes, and night-inspired pieces by Bartók, Schoenberg, Mozart, Couperin, Ravel and others. Michael Berkeley is Composer-in-Residence. ryedalefestival.com

Snape Proms

August 1-31

Thirty nights of folk, world, jazz and classical music, plus comedy and poetry hosted by Aldeburgh Music at the Maltings Concert Hall in Snape on the Suffolk coast. The 2015 line-up includes the John Wilson and BBC Concert orchestras, guitarist Miloš Karadaglić, saxophonist Courtney Pine, and the RPO playing Sinatra. aldeburgh.co.uk

Spitalfields Music Summer Festival

June 2-16

This year, this East London festival will be curated by three Associate Artists: composer Emily Hall,

composer and saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings and early music ensemble La Nuova Musica. Not to be missed is the London premiere of Emily Hall's *Folie à Deux*. Presented by Mahogany Opera Group, the work features a brand new musical instrument - the electro-magnetic harp - plus a libretto by long-time Björk collaborator Sjón. Another highlight will be 'Georgian London: Global Metropolis' - a performance from the City of London Sinfonia and Polyphony, celebrating four composers who came to London in search of fame and fortune: Haydn, JC Bach, Mozart and Handel. spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk

St Andrews Voices

October 22-25

This year's festival - Scotland's only one devoted to the voice - features Voces8 in residence, who will be performing a late-night event of primarily Renaissance music, and a Saturday afternoon event of light repertoire. They will also be hosting public workshops. Other highlights include a recital by Sir Willard White. standrewsvoices.com

St Endellion Summer Festival

July 29 - August 7

The highlight of this Cornish festival is a performance of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, conducted by Martyn Brabbins and with Sir John Tomlinson in the title-role. Haydn's *The Creation* is presented at both Truro Cathedral and St Endellion, with Mark Padmore and Marcus Farnsworth among the soloists. Another vocal highlight will be Roderick Williams singing Elgar's *Sea Pictures*. Orchestral offerings

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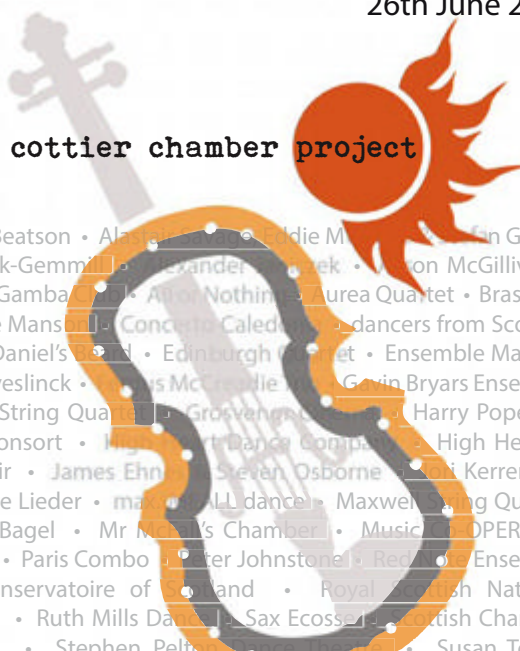
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- | | |
|---|--|
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The Radcliffe Centre, Buckingham | Sophia Grech – Mezzo Soprano,
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| Tuesday 7 July, 8pm
The Ugland Auditorium, Stowe | The Maurizi Ensemble
MOZART: <i>String Quintet in G minor</i>
BRAHMS: <i>Piano Quartet in A major</i> |
| Wednesday 8 July, 8pm
Buckingham Parish Church | Dima Tkachenko – Violin plays VIVALDI: <i>The Four Seasons</i> ,
with members of The Orchestra of Stowe Opera |
| Thursday 9 July, 8pm
The Radcliffe Centre, Buckingham | Nicola Grunberg – Piano, Julian Metzger – Cello,
Robert Secret – Viola
JOHANNES BRAHMS: <i>Trio in A minor op.114</i>
DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH: <i>Sonata for viola and piano Op.147</i> |
| Friday 10 July, 8pm
The Radcliffe Centre, Buckingham | Cuillin Sound: Dana Morgan – Flute, Sarah Watts – Clarinet,
Laurence Perkins – Bassoon, <i>The Heart of the Hebrides</i> |
| Saturday 11 July, 8pm
Buckingham Parish Church | The Orchestra of Stowe Opera
Conductor – Robert Secret, Craig Green – Piano
JOHANNES BRAHMS: <i>Piano Concerto No. 1, op.15</i>
SAINT-SAËNS: <i>Symphony No.3: 'Organ Symphony' op.78</i> |

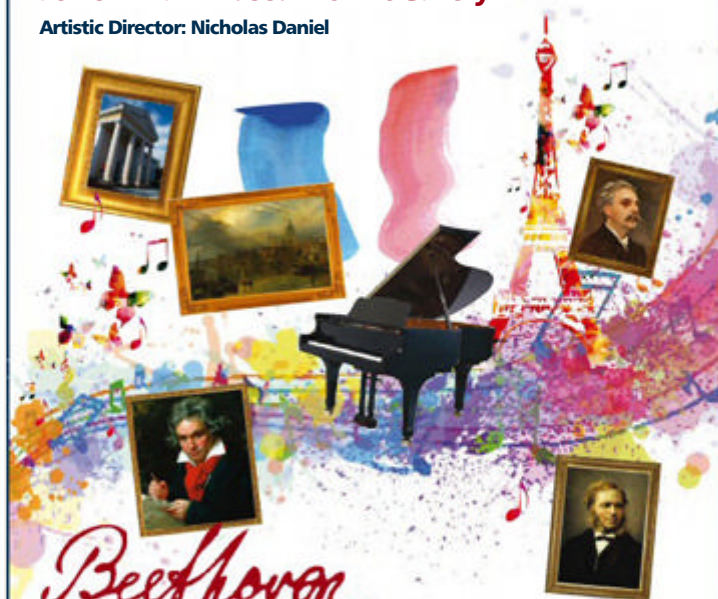
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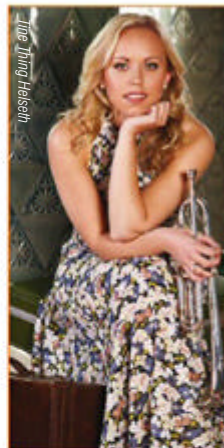
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include the opening concert, when Charles Owen will perform Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto. Chamber music concerts include Ryan Wigglesworth's *Echo and Narcissus*, performed by him, Mark Padmore and Pamela Helen Stephen. endellionfestivals.org.uk

St Magnus International Festival

June 18-25

Due to its location in the Orkney Islands, the multi-arts festival's relaxed, concert-going days are extended by the fact that the midsummer sun is still in the sky at 10pm. Under the continued Artistic Direction of Scottish composer Alasdair Nicolson, the highlights for this year include the Scottish CO, conducted by Antonio Mendes, performing Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. Also, the Corsican male-voice ensemble, A Fletta, perform traditional music at St Magnus Cathedral. There will be brand new music in the form of the world premiere of Alasdair Nicolson's *The Last Post*. stmagnusfestival.com

Sherbourne Abbey Festival

May 1-5

With music of all genres, and 70 per cent of performances free to attend, there really is something for everyone at this festival. A key highlight for 2015 will be a concert version of *War Horse*, *Only Remembered*, with readings by author Michael Morpurgo and songs performed by John Tams and Barry Coope. Other highlights include performances in the abbey from vocal groups Tenebrae and Voces8, and a recorder workshop run by recorder group, i Flautisti. sherbourneabbeyfestival.org

Southern Cathedrals Festival

July 15-18

The festival takes place in Salisbury Cathedral this year. With 2015 marking the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, this is a special year for the city because one of the four original copies of the document resides in the cathedral's Chapter House. Highlights include a lecture recital by Professor John Harper with the Salisbury Cathedral Chamber Choir exploring the wider influences of the Magna Carta. A unique aspect of the festival is its commitment to sharing liturgy and worship as well as music, so there will be five services in total, including an evensong featuring the premiere of

a newly commissioned anthem by Howard Moody. southerncathedralsfestival.org.uk

Spring Sounds Festival

May 22 - June 12

The Orchestra of the Swan's Spring Sounds series presents four concerts over four weeks in Stratford Arts House. The orchestra's 2014-16 resident composer is Dobrinka Tabakova, and thus her works feature prominently in the season. One highlight will be violinist Tamsin Waley-Cohen joining the orchestra, conducted by David Curtis, in a performance of Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*. Another concert will feature her as soloist in a work by Tabakova called *High Line*, composed as a companion piece to the Vaughan Williams. orchestraoftheswan.org

Swaledale Festival

May 23 - June 6

With concert venues ranging from tiny chapels to mighty castles, this festival in the North Yorkshire Dales must be one of the most characterful. Artists include violinist Magdalena Filipczak, the Škampa Quartet playing Beethoven and Janáček, an evening with The King's Singers, the Tenebrae Consort performing 16th-century English music, the Royal Northern Sinfonia with James Gilchrist, and a Big Sing Day with Bob Chilcott. swalefest.org.uk

Three Choirs Festival

July 25 - August 1

The historic festival comes to Hereford this year. Artistic Director Geraint Bowen has chosen to reflect the festival's heritage by presenting repertoire that would have been well known to participants at the start of the 18th century, alongside more recent works whose sound world would have been utterly unimaginable to them. The opening service will feature the period-instrument Corelli Ensemble and the music of Purcell, while the period-instrument Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment will visit the festival for the first time, accompanying the Three Cathedral Choirs of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester in a historically performed performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. Premieres will include a new set of Evening Anticles by Bob Chilcott. 3choirs.org

Tilford Bach Festival

June 12-14

Tilford village, near Farnham in Surrey, hosts a weekend of Bach. The highlight this year will be the festival finale: a one-voice-per-part arrangement of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* accompanied by the London Handel Orchestra led by Adrian Butterfield. The performance will be repeated at St John's, Smith Square on Tuesday June 16. Other performances over the weekend feature the *Brandenbergs* and orchestral suites, and the *Goldberg Variations* with Steven Devine. tilbach.org.uk

Two Moors Festival

October 15-24

This year the Two Moors Festival celebrates its 15th anniversary. It pays tribute to its farming connections by reviving its 2006 opera commission, *Tarka the Otter*, which won Stephen McNeff Best Stage Work at the 2007 BBC Radio 3 British Composer Awards. The production will take place in Exeter Cathedral. New music will come in the form of specially commissioned songs by Judith Bingham, written for and performed by Sarah Connolly and pianist Joseph Middleton. thetwomoorsfestival.co.uk

Ulverston International Music Festival

June 12-20

A 2015 highlight will be the festival's Artistic Director, pianist Anthony Hewitt, performing the Brahms Piano Concerto No 1 with the Royal Northern Sinfonia. Another will be a recital of Brahms and Beethoven from Tasmin Little (violin) and Martin Roscoe (piano). ulverstonmusicfestival.co.uk

Vale of Glamorgan Festival

May 12-23

At venues including BBC Hoddinott Hall, Dyffryn House and Penarth's All Saints Church, this festival celebrates the work of living composers. The programme will focus on the music of Richard Ayres, Dobrinka Tabakova and Arvo Pärt in his 80th birthday year. Artists performing include Amsterdam's Nieuw Ensemble, viol consort Fretwork, and violinist Sara Trickey. Forming a central part of the celebration of the music of Arvo Pärt, the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and Tallinn CO will give individual concerts before joining together for the finale at St David's Hall under the baton of Kristjan Järvi. valeofglamorgenfestival.org.uk

Wardsbrook Concerts

May 10, June 14 & 27

2015 is the third festival of song held in a timber-framed Tudor barn in Ticehurst, East Sussex. This year the usual morning-concert format will be changed to an early evening event for the third recital, allowing guests to enjoy a glass of wine in the gardens afterwards. The first recital will be given by one of the festival's co-founders, Toby Spence, accompanied on the piano by Julian Milford. The two recitals in June will be given by mezzo-soprano Alice Coote and baritone Christopher Maltman. wardsbrookconcerts.org.uk

West Meon Music Festival

September 11-13

Set in the Hampshire village of West Meon, the Primrose Piano Quartet's festival will feature a chamber work by Mozart in every concert, combined with works by composers from those countries he visited. For younger audience members there will be a children's concert on Saturday morning, which will further explore the idea of travel. westmeonmusic.co.uk

Wimbledon International Music Festival

November 14-29

Now in its seventh year, the festival in 2015 welcomes such artists as Sir Andrés Schiff, the Emerson Quartet, harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, and Matthew Trusler and Ashley Wass with their *Alice in Wonderland* recital. With 'dance' as a major theme, the festival features Rambert Dance in the world premiere of a co-commissioned work, and dance-based programmes from Renaissance Winds and Calefax Reed Quintet. wimbledonmusicfestival.co.uk

York Early Music Festival

July 2-11

Entente Cordiale is the theme this year - 300 years of music-making from England and France, from the battle of Agincourt in 1415 to the court of Louis XIV. The Clerks' Group will be commemorating Agincourt in the Quire of York Minster, while the London Handel Players will perform music connected to the court of Louis XIV, who died in 1715. Other guests include The Taverner Consort directed by Andrew Parrott, harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, and The Early Opera Company singing Purcell and Charpentier. ncem.co.uk/yemf

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Matinée July 25: 14:00

Giuseppe Verdi

Un ballo in maschera

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CAPTURING THE MOMENT

Thanks to the beautiful surroundings and relaxed atmosphere, musicians often give their best performances at festivals. Harriet Smith explores the growing phenomenon of festival recordings, which are often far more than mere audience souvenirs

No matter whether a festival is set in the midst of a city or tucked away in the mountains, whether it involves slow train journeys that edge through landscapes laced with ice and snow, or is set above a cerulean Canadian lake, there's no doubt that it offers something special to musicians and audiences alike. For a start, as a punter, there's the removal of the barrier that you find in everyday concert-going. Gone, too, is the formality of much of the proceedings: we see musicians not only on stage, but in jeans, relaxed rehearsal-style; we discover what yoghurt they like for breakfast, how they take their coffee. We coexist as routine human beings, even though some of these figures may be god-like to us.

But festival performances are, increasingly, not just for the lucky few who happen to be there, and the finest discs and DVDs that emanate from such surroundings are far more than mere souvenirs of a unique combination of musicians in a unique atmosphere. In an era when the major companies aren't really acting like majors any more, the market has become a free-for-all, and live recordings, more than ever before, form an absolutely vital and vibrant strand. Nowhere is this more significant than in the field of opera, which has become less and

less financially viable in the studio. But chamber music is a real winner, too, as we're presented with line-ups of musicians that might not happen elsewhere owing to scheduling clashes and – that rare thing – record company contracts.

Lars Vogt's 'Spannungen' Festival, located in the unlikely setting of a hydroelectric power station at Heimbach, is a case in point. From the first event in 1998 it was partnered by Deutschlandradio, which ensured not only broadcasts, but that

'People who've never been to Spannungen can enjoy performances where very special things can happen' – Lars Vogt, Artistic Director

everything was recorded as a matter of course. By the second year, Lars Vogt hit upon the notion of issuing the best performances on CD – usually two a year. Their recording producer, Stephen Schmidt, is on hand during the festival, as well as being in charge of the final edit. As Vogt points out, there's a three-fold importance to these discs: 'Mostly it's a joy to have a memory of what we felt was particularly good. And we've also discovered that a lot of people at the festival like to have these "souvenirs" as a memory of the event. But also, even people who have never been to Heimbach are happy to hear performances with a live atmosphere where very special things can happen that wouldn't necessarily occur in a studio context.' The important thing here – and it goes for festivals everywhere – is that they are truly live: 'We do record



Relaxed yet exciting – the informality of summer music festivals such as the Spannungen (left) and Malboro (above) can inspire unique performances

general rehearsals so, if needs be, we can patch little things that might go wrong, but on the whole it's the live context that makes them exciting, even if there are small mistakes.'

Recording festival performances is no modern phenomenon, of course, and Glyndebourne was remarkably quick to get in on the act back in the 1930s, when its Mozart/Da Ponte operas appeared on HMV's Mozart Opera Society 78s, filling a strong need among collectors. For all that early reviewers could be sniffy about some of the singers (and there was a certain amount of cutting going on), the real glory was Fritz Busch's conducting, which was lithe, lively, dramatic and utterly affectionate – in fact, those readings sound astoundingly modern even today and in Naxos's clean transfers you have a veritable bargain.

Festivals are, thankfully, not merely a destination for the wealthy; some have an allure for specialists of all kinds, which is reflected in some gloriously collectable CDs. The Schloss vor Husum Festival, for example, set in the northernmost reaches of Germany, is dedicated to off-the-beaten-track piano repertoire where the musicians are selected – refreshingly – not on the basis of their fame but on their ability to play Alexis de Castillons, Antoine Mariotte, Adolf Wiklund...you get the picture. This is the kind of set-up where if it's Liszt, it needs to be suitably obscure Liszt (his late Toccata, for instance), where Marc-André Hamelin and Peter Jablonski rub shoulders, disc-wise, with Peter Froudjian (the festival's pianist-founder) and eclecticism is the name of the game. Since 1987 each festival has yielded a disc of highlights released on pianophile Jesper Buhl's Danacord label. And though in the early days the results weren't exactly of audiophile quality, that has not been a problem more recently. It's invidious to pick highlights from this intentionally unstarry set-up, but Hamelin playing Alexis Weissenberg's take on Trenet's 'Boum!' in 2008 is a little gem.

Then there are festivals in which recording is certainly not the prime object, but which can catch the greatest of musicians on the wing. In Vermont, there's Marlboro, that legendary chamber music festival created by Rudolf Serkin in 1951, which brings together young talents and the world's greatest

musicians, and allows them the luxury of unlimited rehearsal time. It certainly doesn't shout about its recordings (they're hardly prominently placed on their website), and they are relatively few in number, but there are treasures to be found, not least a fabulous *Archduke* from the current director, Dame Mitsuko Uchida, along with violinist Soovin Kim and the Guarneri Quartet's late-lamented cellist, David Soyer.

Festival recordings can also provide rare opportunities to hear musicians who have tired of the studio. For more than a decade now, 'Progetto Martha Argerich' at the Lugano Festival has ensured that the Argentinian's legion of fans are kept happy. It's undoubtedly one of the most eagerly awaited events on the calendar, though the resulting 'Martha Argerich and Friends' party bags (originally on EMI, now Warner) can be of variable quality. If the 2013 offering was a touch on the dull side, the previous year was a good deal more lively, featuring Argerich herself in Prokofiev's Second Violin Sonata with Renaud Capuçon, and a Mozart four-hander, the Sonata, K381, with Maria João Pires, but also gems from others, including a remarkable three-piano arrangement of Debussy's *La mer* by Carlo M Griguoli, and Medtner's rarely heard Piano Quintet.

Two-and-a-half hours up the track from Lugano, there is of course Lucerne. And Lucerne meant Abbado, who enjoyed such a late flowering there, not only in the works of Bruckner and Mahler but, poignantly, Mozart's concertos K466 and 503, which reunited him with Argerich, with whom he'd had such a potent musical partnership over nearly half a century. The resulting disc demonstrates a potent mix of Abbado's fastidious yet generous music-making and Argerich's inspired flightiness. Two opposites, musically speaking, yet together forming something truly miraculous. That's an adjective that could equally be applied to Abbado's performance of Bruckner's Ninth from the same 2013 festival, with the orchestra he founded, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. It's a reading that exudes luminosity at every turn, and one which Rob Cowan, in these pages in September 2014, reckoned to be mandatory listening, offering 'clarity, wisdom and vision'. **G**

SIX FESTIVAL RECORDINGS

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Lucerne
Mozart
Piano Concertos
Nos 20 & 25
Argerich;

Orchestra Mozart / Abbado
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Lugano
'Martha Argerich
and Friends
Live from
Lugano, 2012'

EMI/Warner Classics
721119-2 (8/13)



Glyndebourne
Mozart
Le nozze di Figaro
Soloists;
Glyndebourne

Chorus and Orchestra / F Busch
Naxos mono 8.110186-7 (8/35^{ff})



Marlboro
Beethoven
'Archduke' Trio.
Mozart String
Quintet, K593.

Schubert Piano Trio No 2
Uchida; Kim; Soyer et al

Marlboro Recording Society 80001



Schloss vor Husum
'Rarities of Piano
Music' **Berman;**
Attwood; Pascal;
Jablonski;

Froudjian; Pöntinen; Hamelin
Danacord DACOCD689 (2/10)



Spannungen
Widmann; Jensen;
Mahni; van Keulen;
Eberle; Roberts;
Tetzlaff; Kawahara

Cavi 8553209

EUROPE FESTIVALS

Aix-en-Provence Easter Festival France

March 30 - April 12

Established in 2013, this Provençal festival is going strong. Pianist Martha Argerich and violinist Gidon Kremer will be performing two violin sonatas by Mieczysław Weinberg, the Polish-born but naturalised Russian composer and friend of Shostakovich, followed by Strauss and Beethoven. Another highlight will be countertenor Philippe Jaroussky performing alongside pianist Jérôme Ducros and the Quatuor Ebène in 'Green' – a musical journey from Fauré to Ferré, with Verlaine the underlying theme. The many other artists taking part in the festival include the English Baroque Soloists with Sir John Eliot Gardiner, violinist Maxim Vengerov and pianist Krystian Zimerman.

festivalpaques.com/en/

Aix-en-Provence Festival France

July 2-12

Operatic offerings this year include a new production of Handel's *Alcina* directed by Andrea Marcon, starring Patricia Petibon and Philippe Jaroussky and accompanied by the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra; also, a double-bill performance presenting Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* alongside Stravinsky's *Persephone*, directed by Peter Sellars. Sir Simon Rattle will be conducting Jonathan Dove's new children's opera about Theseus and the Minotaur, *The Monster in the*

Maze, which was co-commissioned by the festival along with the London Symphony Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic. The festival's commitment to interpreting the works of Mozart continues with a new production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Concert offerings include Quatuor Modigliani performing Beethoven, Ravel and Dohnányi, and Krystian Zimerman performing Brahms's Piano Concerto No 1 with Rattle and the LSO. A dance highlight will be *Spectres*, for six dancers and string quartet.

festival-aix.com/en

Baltic Sea Festival Sweden

August 24-30

This Stockholm-based festival pays special attention to music from the Baltic Sea region, and to encouraging new-generation musicians. The 2015 events feature two of the festival's founders, Directors Esa-Pekka Salonen and Valery Gergiev, as well as the Swedish RSO and the Swedish Radio Choir. The festival will be particularly celebrating Tchaikovsky's 175th anniversary, as well as the 150th anniversaries of Sibelius and Nielsen.

balticseafestival.com

Beethovenfest Bonn Germany

September 4 - October 4

Using Beethoven's *Diabelli* Variations as a starting point, the theme of 'Variations' runs through the festival's programme. The two notable conductor appearances

this year are Daniel Barenboim with the Staatskapelle Berlin, and Zubin Mehta with the Israel Philharmonic. The guest orchestras are the Budapest Festival Orchestra under Iván Fischer, and the period-instrument orchestra Anima Eterna Brugge with Jos van Immerseel, who will be recreating the sound world of Beethoven's time. Soloists this year include Sir András Schiff, Sol Gabetta, Martin Grubinger, Vesselina Kasarova and Arabella Steinbacher. Away from Beethoven, the festival will premiere a new work by Salvatore Sciarrino.

en.beethovenfest.de

Bregenz Festival Austria

July 22 - August 23

The first season under the Artistic Directorship of Elisabeth Sobotka opens with Puccini's *Turandot*, directed by Marco Arturo Marelli on the festival's floating lake stage; Paolo Carignani conducts. The Festspielhaus production this year is Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, directed by Stefan Herheim and conducted by Johannes Debus. Meanwhile, the Workshop Theatre presents the Austrian premiere of a co-production with Oper Frankfurt and Ensemble Modern, Peter Eötvös's *The Golden Dragon*. An orchestral highlight will be Vienna SO performing the Austrian premiere of Miroslav Srnka's *No Night No Land No Sky*.

bregenzerfestspiele.com/en

Dresden Music Festival Germany

May 13 - June 7

Under the Artistic Direction of cellist Jan Vogler, the festival theme this year is 'Fire and Ice', exploring the contrasts between the temperaments and temperatures of music of the North and that of the South. The orchestras in residence this year are the Philadelphia Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Sir Antonio Pappano. Other visiting performers include the Swedish RSO with Daniel Harding, the Venice Baroque Orchestra, and Avi Avital. The Dresden Festival Orchestra will, once again, be focused on historically informed performance practice, one highlight of which will be a performance of Beethoven's Violin Concerto,

conducted by Ivor Bolton with Isabelle Faust as soloist. The orchestra will also open the festival in a special gala concert, joined by, among others, soprano Simone Kermes and street dancer Lil Buck.

musikfestspiele.com

Festival Berlioz France

August 20-30

Celebrating the music of Hector Berlioz, the festival is held in and around the composer's birthplace town of La Côte Saint-André, near Grenoble in south-east France. The main symphonic concerts take place within the court of the town's Château Louis XI. This year's theme is 'En musique sur les routes Napoléon!' to mark the bicentenary of Napoleon's return from Elba. Highlights will include an open-air performance of the *Te Deum* in the Roman theatre at Vienne, as well as Sir John Eliot Gardiner and his Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique performing the *Symphonie fantastique*, followed by its rarely heard sequel, *Lélio*. Other orchestras taking part include the Orchestre National de Lyon conducted by Leonard Slatkin, and L'Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine.

festivalberlioz.com

George Enescu Festival Romania

August 30 - September 20

Highlights of the Bucharest festival this year include a festival debut by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle, performing Britten's *Frank Bridge Variations* and Shostakovich's Symphony No 4. The San Francisco SO will also be appearing for the first time, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, in Bartók's Piano Concerto No 2 with pianist Yuja Wang, and Mahler's Symphony No 1. Other orchestras making their festival debuts are the Bayerische Staatsoper and the Konzerthaus Berlin. Another noteworthy performance will be the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Andris Nelsons, performing Bartók's Violin Concerto No 1 with Janine Janson as soloist. There's also plenty of Romanian talent, such as the Bucharest CO and the Romanian National Radio Orchestra. Recitalists include pianist Piotr Anderszewski, and violinist David Grimal.

festivalenescu.ro/en

SPECTACULAR LOCATION... *Bergen, Norway*

Bergen International Festival

May 27 - June 10

Set against a dramatic fjord-filled backdrop, the festival showcases the best of Norwegian arts and the wider northern European scene. Highlights for 2015 include a world premiere by composer Per Norgård alongside works by Jean Sibelius, Arne Nordheim and Edvard Grieg. Italian Baroque comes in the form of a concert version of Vinci's *Catone in Utica*, with Il Pomo d'Oro, conducted by Riccardo Minasi. Then, early music and contemporary dance combine for a performance of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, with the German dance company Sasha Waltz & Guests and the Freiburg Baroque Consort. As for concerts, pianist Leif Ove Andsnes will be performing a series of recitals with cellist Torleif Thedéen, violinist Akiko Suwanai and Norway's most talented young musicians. Other recital artists include Anne Sofie von Otter, and baritone Bo Skovhus performing Schubert's *Winterreise*. fib.no/en



Ghent Festival of Flanders Belgium

September 12-26

The two-week festival – comprising 180 concerts and four major events – is spread across various venues in East-Flanders and the historical city centre of Ghent (Unesco Creative City of Music). Artists include clarinetist Sabine Meyer, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Collegium Vocale Gent, the Matangi Quartet, the Tetzlaff Quartet, guitarist Marco Rodrigues and pianist Angela Hewitt. One of the major festival events is 'OdeGand', a celebration of music on and along Ghent's canals.

gentfestival.be

Göttingen International Handel Festival Germany

May 14-25

'Heroines' is the theme for 2015. The opera production is *Agrippina* at Göttingen's Deutsches Theater, directed by Laurence Dale and conducted by the Festival's Artistic Director Laurence Cummings. Tying in with this is a concert in which mezzo-soprano Ann Hallenberg performs the results of a trawl through the musical archives of Europe and the USA to unearth all surviving operatic manuscripts containing the figure of Agrippina. Also featuring Il Pomo d'Oro, the programme is interspersed with readings of newly composed English-language texts, read by author Donna Leon.

haendel-festspiele.de/en

Gstaad Menuhin Festival & Academy Switzerland

July 16 - September 5

Embracing the theme 'Ironie et Musique', this year's festival welcomes an array of artists – including Jonas Kaufmann, Cecilia Bartoli, Sir Andrés Schiff, Zubin Mehta, Emmanuel Pahud and The King's Singers – performing 50 concerts in many stunning locations. Highlights include recitals by Kristian Bezuidenhout, Alina Ibragimova and other top musicians in the region's most beautiful churches, while Jean-Yves Thibaudet takes three concerts as Artist-in-Residence.

menuhinfestivalgstaad.ch

Herrenchiemsee Festival Germany

July 14-26

The theme for 2015 is 'Of Foreign Lands and Peoples', taken from the first of Schumann's *Kinderszenen*. The result is a programme of music from all over the world, though the festival never quite loses sight of

its historical 'patron' King Ludwig II. The opening concert will feature four JS Bach cantatas, performed by the Kammerchor and Orchester KlangVerwaltung, referencing the journey of the magi from Saba to Bethlehem. The Bamberg SO will perform Smetana's *Má vlast*, Paul McCreech and his Gabrieli Consort and Players will present Purcell's *King Arthur*, and a Bulgarian chorus and orchestra will visit for Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.

herrenchiemsee-festspiele.de/en

Hitzacker Summer Music Festival Germany

July 25 - August 2

Under the musical direction of violinist Carolin Widmann, this is Germany's oldest chamber music festival, situated in Lower Saxony, on the shores of the river Elbe. This year, the festival celebrates its 70th anniversary. The artists performing on opening day are recorder player Maurice Steger, harpsichordist/organist Naoki Kitaya, oboist Heinz Holliger and the Ensemble Resonanz. Recital highlights include Kristian Bezuidenhout on the fortepiano, and a jazz-piano performance from Florian Weber. Other artists and ensembles appearing at the festival include Christian and Tanja Tetzlaff (violin and cello), violinist Florian Donderer, pianist Lars Vogt, Trio Catch and the Doric Quartet.

musiktage-hitzacker.de/en

Incontri in Terra di Siena Italy

July 24 - August 2

Artists appearing at the Tuscan chamber music festival this year include the Borromeo Quartet, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Ian Bostridge and Julius Drake, and Alessio Bax and Lucille Chung.

itslaface.org

Indian summer in Levoča Slovakia

October 9-12

Levoča is a medieval Unesco Word Heritage City and it has just become more accessible with the recent introduction of budget flights to nearby Poprad. Noteworthy events include two concerts from the Czech Philharmonic Quartet at the historic Levoča theatre, featuring works by Janáček, Schubert and Shostakovich. They will also be premiering a new work by Steve Elcock, inspired by the town's famous 17th-century landmark The Cage of Opprobrium. Other artists include the Lotz Trio of basset horns, plus clarinetist Ronald Sebesta and cellist Jozef Lupták.

lbfestival.eu

SPECTACULAR LOCATION... *Grafenegg, Austria*

Grafenegg Festival

**August 14 -
September 6**

Under the Artistic Direction of Austria's pre-eminent pianist Rudolf Buchbinder, concerts take place in the grounds of Grafenegg Castle, just outside Vienna. The 2015 festivities kick off with a fanfare



written by Composer-in-Residence Matthias Pintscher. The Vienna PO will be joined by soloist Elisabeth Kulman and conducted by Semyon Bychkov. Visiting international ensembles include La Folia Baroque Orchestra with Simone Kermes, and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande with Neeme Järvi. Buchbinder himself will appear with the Svetlanov SO, conducted by Vasily Petrenko. Plus, a special 'double-concert' programme will see three orchestras performing two different concerts on consecutive evenings: the Israel PO under Zubin Mehta, the Boston SO under Andris Nelsons, and the Berlin PO under Sir Simon Rattle. grafenegg.com

Innsbruck Festival of Early Music Austria

July 14 - August 28

Entitled 'Stylus Phantasticus', the programme of events this year is themed around improvisation. The two operas at the centre of the festival are Lully's *Armide*, which features the Nordic Baroque Dancers, and Porpora's *Il Germanico*. Other highlights include the period orchestra Hofkapelle München giving a gala concert entitled 'Gala for Maria Theresa', viola da gamba player Maddalena Del Gobbo, and the Arnold Schoenberg Choir performing sacred music by Charpentier and Kerll.

altemusik.at/en

Istanbul Music Festival Turkey

May 31 - June 29

'Cultural landscapes' is the theme, referencing the nationalist movement which arose through the increasing consolidation of European borders in the 19th century, and the subsequent predisposition of many composers towards folkloric elements in their music. Twenty-seven concerts of symphonic, chamber, vocal and recital music will take place in venues all over Istanbul. Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen is the resident guest orchestra, while visiting ensembles include the Lausanne CO, the Franz Liszt CO, Kremerata Baltica, and the 12 Cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic. Other artists include Yuri Bashmet, Boris Berezovsky, Emmanuelle Haïm, Christian Tetzlaff and Gidon Kremer.

muzik.iks.org/en

Itinéraire Baroque France

June 6 - July 30 / August 2

The Dordogne is the idyllic setting for Ton Koopman's early music festival. The season is opened this year by the young period ensemble, *Scherzi Musicali*, with a programme named after their latest disc, 'The Tears of Orpheus', themed around the myth of Orpheus and Euridice. Other highlights will include a recital entitled 'Bach and his Sons' by harpsichordist Patrizia Marisaldi and viola da gamba player Alberto Rasi. Ton Koopman himself will appear directing the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra in arrangements of Vivaldi concertos, and these musicians will also close the festival with Handel's *Fireworks Suite*.

itinerairebaroque.com

Kissinger Sommer Germany

June 19 - July 19

Based in the Bavarian spa town of Bad Kissingen, the festival celebrates its 30th anniversary, opening proceedings with a concert starring the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester under the baton of Andrey Boreyko, with cellist Sol Gabetta. The middle weekend of June 26-28 will be a busy one, with eight concerts featuring artists such as soprano Waltraud Meier, clarinetist Sabine Meyer, tenor Christoph Prégardien and violinist Midori. The BBC SO will also be visiting, conducted by Sakari Oramo. Further highlights include a gala concert featuring Cecilia Bartoli, a recital by Grigory Sokolov, and Daniil Trifonov performing with the Mariinsky Orchestra under Gergiev.

kissingersommer.de

Verbier festival

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Lofoten Chamber Music Festival Norway

July 6-12

Set amid the spectacular scenery of Norway's Lofoten Islands, this festival now alternates each year between piano and chamber music. This year it's the turn of the latter, and the opening concert in the Kulturskus features the Fauré and Engedard Quartets with pianist Nils Mortensen, performing Suk's Piano Quartet Op 1 and Webern's Piano Quintet. Other performers over the course of the week will be violinists Isabelle Faust and Yuuko Shiokawa, pianist Alexander Melnikov, and the Danish Quartet. The biggest event of all will be an outdoor concert in the famous Trollfjord, with the music interspersed with readings from *The Battle of the Trollfjord*, delivered by the actor Bjørn Sundquist.

lofotenfestival.no

Lucerne Summer Festival Switzerland

August 14 - September 13

'Humour' is the theme, from the clever wit of Haydn to the bitterly angry satire in Shostakovich's symphonies. Haydn's music will act as a leitmotif throughout the festival programming, performed by the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, the BPO with Simon Rattle, the Boston SO with Andris Nelsons, and the VPO with Semyon Bychkov. The St Petersburg PO and Yuri Temirkanov will perform Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, while the Mahler CO and Daniele Gatti will perform *Pulcinella*. Actor Klaus Maria Brandauer will join Trevor Pinnock in a performance of Mendelssohn's incidental music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Verdi's comedy, *Falstaff*, will also be among the offerings, as will a Boulez Day. Violinist Isabelle Faust will be the festival's 'Artiste Etoile', and the two Composers-in-Residence will be Jürg Wyttenbach and Tod Machover.

lucernefestival.ch

Lugano Festival Switzerland

April 3 - June 29

Lugano will be opening a brand new concert hall in September, meaning that this will be the Lugano Festival's last year performing in the Palazzo dei Congressi. As a result, the 2015 programme is centred around the themes of Travel, New Territories and Metamorphosis. Highlights include Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields directed from the violin by Julia Fischer; also, Dvořák's *New World* Symphony performed by

the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy. Among the artists joining Martha Argerich for the annual Martha Argerich Project (June 10-29) are pianists Nicholas Angelich, Khatia Buniatishvili, Stephen Kovacevich, Gabriela Montero and Sergio Tiempo, along with violinist Renaud Capuçon and clarinetist Paul Meyer.

luganofestival.ch

Moritzburg Festival Germany

August 15-30

Under the Artistic Direction of cellist Jan Vogler, the Dresden-based Moritzburg Festival has established itself as one of the leading international chamber music festivals. This year, the festival programming is centred around the groundbreaking impact that Beethoven had on chamber music evolution in the 19th century. Matthias Pintscher will be this year's Composer-in-Residence.

Soloists Alessio Bax and Francesco Piemontesi (piano), Lawrence Power (viola), Felix Klierer (horn) and Johannes Moser (cello) will rehearse then perform in different Baroque and modern venues around Dresden. The Moritzburg Festival Academy will work on Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4 with Lise de la Salle, directed by Milan Turković, then perform the opening concert.

moritzburgfestival.de/english

Munich Opera Festival Germany

June 24 - July 31

This year, the Bayerische Staatsoper appears at the Prinzregententheater with the premiere of a new production of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* under Constantinos Carydis. The other festival premiere will be of a new production of Strauss's *Arabella*, marking film director Andreas Dresen's operatic directorial debut in Munich. Anja Harteros takes the title-role, with Philippe Jordan conducting. The festival also features three new productions from the current season: Janáček's *The Makropoulos Case*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (the latter transmitted live to audiences in Max-Joseph-Square and online via staatsoper.de/tv).

staatsoper.de

Musique Cordiale France

August 1-15

This southern-Provence festival boasts 17 different venues this year, spread around the Pays de

Fayence. There will be 25 concerts for 2015, including a fully staged opera production of Puccini's *Tosca*; also, an *a cappella* choral concert to include Josef Rheinberger's *Cantus Missae*. The festival culminates in two performances of Haydn's *The Creation*, conducted by Graham Ross. Away from vocal music, orchestral concerts conducted by James Lowe will include cellist Chiara Enderle in Tchaikovsky, and countertenor James Hall in Purcell and Handel.

musique-cordiale.com

New Ross Piano Festival Ireland

September 24-27

New Ross is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its keyboard festival this year, and will also be marking Scriabin's 100th anniversary. The festival opens with a gala concert featuring the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, who are presenting three piano concertos performed by three pianists: Cédric Tiberghien, Alexi Grynuk and the festival's Artistic Director, Finghin Collins. Pianists Olga Scheps and Daria van den Bercken will also be taking part, as will the Fidelio Piano Trio.

newrosspianofestival.com

Opera Days Rotterdam The Netherlands

May 22-31

The festival theme for 2015 is 'Equality', following on from 'Liberty' in 2013 and 'Fraternity' in 2014. A Figaro theme links *The Barber of Seville*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and their original French author, Beaumarchais. There's also *King Size*, directed and composed by Christoph Marthaler and scored by Bendix Dethlefsen - an original take on the Liederabend, set around the story of a couple trying to sleep in an unfamiliar room; they console themselves through songs from Purcell to the Jackson Five via Schumann and Michel Polnareff as their dreams take over.

operadagenrotterdam.nl/en

Orpheus & Bacchus Music Festivals France

June 13-18, July 4-11, October 3-10

Situated deep in France's wine-growing Bordeaux region, this is a residential festival on a very small scale, in which the concert venue is an 18th-century beamed salon. Guests and artists intermingle, particularly for gourmet dinners. The first festival is the June Piano & Duoclave Festival (the festival owns a rare Pleyel Double piano as

well as a Steinway) which will count Stephen Kovacevich, Kathryn Stott, Piers Lane and 93-year-old American legend Abbey Simon amongst its four generations of pianists. The following month, Humphrey Burton hosts a festival of some of the best young talent in the country. Finally, the October Vendange Festival features the Gould Trio and Wihan Quartet among its performers.

orpheusandbacchus.com

Prague Spring Festival Czech Republic

May 12 - June 3

The 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War finds the festival's emblematic work, Smetana's tone-poem cycle *Má vlast*, symbolically entrusted to the North German Radio Orchestra from Hamburg conducted by Thomas Hengelbrock. The second concert features the St Petersburg Philharmonic performing Shostakovich's Symphony No 7 (*Leningrad*). Then, the '2015 Weekend of Chamber Music' will present 10 concerts over a single weekend around the theme 'Beethoven in Dialogue'. Recitalists include Murray Perahia.

festival.cz

Rheingau Music Festival Germany

June 27 - September 12

Numerous castles, palaces, churches and wineries in the Rheingau and adjoining regions are used as venues for 150 concerts. There are two main themes this year: 25 years of German unification and Tchaikovsky's 175th anniversary. The former will be celebrated in the opening concert, featuring the MDR Rundfunkchor and hr-Sinfonieorchester, conducted by Andrés Orozco-Estrada. Other orchestras performing this year include the San Francisco Symphony conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, and the European Union Youth Orchestra conducted by Xian Zhang.

rheingau-musik-festival.de

Reykjavik Arts Festival Iceland

May 13 - June 7

A highlight this year will be the Icelandic premiere of Britten's *Peter Grimes* in a concert performance taking place in the Harpa Concert Hall, with soloists Stuart Skelton, Susan Gritton and Ólafur Kjartan Sigurðarson; Daniel Bjarnason conducts. Bryn Terfel is also appearing, giving a song recital of works by Keel, Schumann,

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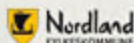


www.lofotenfestival.com

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Isabelle Faust
Alexander Melnikov
Yuuko Shiokawa
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International Applications Accepted

Schubert, Boito, Mozart and Weill. This year, the National Theatre of Iceland will host the Icelandic premiere of *Magnus Maria*, an 'opera about the right gender'.
en.listahatid.is

La Roque d'Anthéron International Piano Festival France

July 24 - August 23

Classic, contemporary, jazz and even electronic music centred around the piano are what to expect from this major French piano festival, with its impressive main concert space in the grounds of the Château de Florans. Among the many pianists performing on the main stage this year are Nikolai Lugansky, Boris Berezovsky, Anne Queffélec, Nicholas Angelich, Leif Ove Andsnes and Iddo Bar-Shai.

festival-piano.com

Salzburg Festival Austria

July 18 - August 30

New productions this year are of *The Marriage of Figaro* by Salzburg's own Wolfgang Amadeus directed by Sven-Eric Bechtolf and conducted by Dan Ettinger, and Beethoven's *Fidelio*, starring Jonas Kaufmann as Florestan, and conducted by Franz Welser-Möst. Contemporary opera comes in the form of a new production of Wolfgang Rihm's *Die Eroberung von Mexiko*. Typically starry song recitals are given by Matthias Goerne, Christiane Karg, Juan Diego Flórez and Christian Gerhaher. The recital series includes treasures, too, such as Sir Andrés Schiff performing the last three sonatas by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert.
salzburgerfestspiele.at/summer

Savonlinna Opera Festival Finland

July 3 - August 2

Operas at this Finnish festival take place amidst the grounds of the city's medieval Olavinlinna castle. Top of the bill this year is the festival's new production of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, with Matti Salminen in the title-role, and Leif Segerstam conducting the Savonlinna Opera Festival Orchestra. There will also be a new Volksoper Wien production of Léhar's *The Merry Widow*, and a Semperoper Dresden production of *The Marriage of Figaro* with the Staatskapelle Dresden in the pit. Concerts include Haydn's *The Creation*, which will be performed in the Kerimäki Church - the world's largest wooden church. The season ends with a jubilee concert

in Olavinlinna Castle in honour of Sibelius in his 150th year, given by the Lahti SO under Okko Kamu.
operafestival.fi/en

Schubertiade Schwarzenberg Austria

June 20-28, August 22-30

Schubertiade Hohenems Austria

May 1-10, October 1-6

Generally considered to be the most important Schubert festival in the world, this intimate alpine festival presents about 80 events across two different venues. The festival is giving a complete cycle of Schubert Lieder spread across the two seasons. Singers performing this year include Ian Bostridge, Matthias Goerne, Angelika Kirchschlager, Sarah Connolly, Diana Damrau and Annette Dasch. Chamber ensembles include the Belcea Quartet, Gautier and Renaud Capuçon, Daniel Müller-Schott, Emmanuel Pahud, the Pavel Haas Quartet and Quatuor Ebène. Pianists include Lars Vogt and Paul Lewis, and orchestras include Cappella Andrea Barca, conducted by Sir András Schiff.

schubertiade.at

Sibelius/Nielsen Composer Festival Sweden

April 14-26

Launched this year by the Royal Stockholm PO under the leadership of Sakari Oramo, this is a one-off festival to honour the 150-year anniversaries of Jean Sibelius and Carl Nielsen. Orchestras from Denmark, Finland and Sweden join the RSPO in the 12-concert festival. All seven of the Sibelius symphonies will be performed, along with Nielsen's six. Programmed alongside them will be symphonies by Mahler, Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Ives, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Vaughan Williams and Walton, reflecting the influences the composers had upon each other.
sibeliusnielsen.se

SOLSberg Festival Switzerland

May 29 - July 1

In the 10th year of her SOLSberg Festival, cellist Sol Gabetta invites musical friends to perform in northern Switzerland, where she is based, but also to venues in Germany and France. Artists include Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Nicholas Angelich and Vilde Frang, while one of the festival's concert highlights is a family-friendly concert on a farm near Olsberg, followed by a big cat show with lions, tigers and cheetahs.
solsberg.ch

SPECTACULAR LOCATION... *Magione, Italy*

Trasimeno Music Festival

July 4-10

Established by pianist Angela Hewitt, much of this festival takes place in the Umbrian town of Magione. The opening concert takes place in the Castle of the Knights of Malta, and stars Hewitt alongside violinist Jan Söderblom and cellist Nicolas Altstaed in a programme to include the Brahms Piano Trio in C and Ravel's Piano Trio, plus two works by Lili Boulanger. The following evening, Hewitt

will join Camerata Salzburg in Foligno's Auditorium San Domenico for Mozart's Piano Concerto in C, K503, alongside Beethoven's Symphony No 4. Also performing are the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Soloists, and the Quartetto Matamoe. trasimenomusicfestival.com



Verbier Festival Switzerland

July 17 - August 2

Kicking off the Swiss alpine festival this year is James Levine, conducting the Verbier Festival Orchestra in Schubert's Symphony No 9. Other conductors include Zubin Mehta, Valery Gergiev, Manfred Honeck, Gianandrea Noseda and Charles Dutoit. A highlight of the festival will be baritone Thomas Quasthoff making his debut as a conductor in a performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with a line-up of soloists to include Mark Padmore as the Evangelist and soloists Christiane Karg, Bernarda Fink and Christopher Maltman. Festival debuts this year include Ton Koopman (harpsichord), Truls Mørk (cello) and Sir Andrés Schiff (piano). Other artists and ensembles this year include the Artémis Quartet, Avi Avital and Joshua Bell.

verbierfestival.com

Verona Arena Opera Festival Italy

June 19 - September 6

Verona's Roman amphitheatre is the spectacular setting for this Italian opera festival. Opening the season in 2015 is Verdi's *Nabucco*. The other operas are Verdi's *Aida*, Puccini's *Tosca*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Orff's *Carmina Burana* will also get an outing.
arena.it

West Cork Chamber Music Festival Ireland

June 26 - July 4

The coastal town of Bantry in County Cork plays host to an impressive

line-up of international artists as it celebrates its 20th anniversary. Some of the celebratory feel will have a Russian flavour, as the festival welcomes the Borodin Quartet in its 70th year. Russian composers featured will be Glinka, Gubaidulina, Prokofiev, Shchedrin, Schnittke, Shostakovich and Weinberg. World premieres include Ian Wilson's *Sonáid Béaloideas* performed by Alina Ibragimova. Other programme highlights include Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* with James Gilchrist, Shchedrin's *Menuhin Sonata* performed by Dmitry Sitkovetsky and Alexander Melnikov, and Brahms's B flat Sextet with Sitkovetsky, Chloë Hanslip, Brett Dean, Lilli Maijala, Marc Coppey and Natalie Clein.
westcorkmusic.ie

Zeist Music Days The Netherlands

August 15-19

Ensembles performing at this chamber music festival, held in the town of Zeist, include the Szymanowski, Novus and Bennewitz Quartets and the Van Baerle Piano Trio. Artists include the festival's Artistic Director, violinist Alexander Pavlovsky of the Jerusalem Quartet, the harpist Remy van Kesteren, bassoonist Bram van Sambeek, and cellist Valentin Erben (formerly with the Alban Berg Quartet). In addition to these concerts, there will be a series of masterclasses for young ensembles given by Erben, Alexander Pavlovsky, the Szymanowski Quartet and violinist Philip Setzer from the Emerson Quartet.
zeistmusicdays.nl

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For the full season and ticket information visit us at www.CastletonFestival.org or call 866.974.0767.

NORTH AMERICA FESTIVALS

Aspen Music Festival CO

July 2 – August 23

'Dreams of Travel' is this year's theme, exploring how composers have enriched their music, either through visiting or imagining distant lands. The festival's centrepiece will be Verdi's *Aida*, conducted by Music Director Robert Spano, in a semi-staged performance. Fully staged opera can be seen at the Aspen Opera Theater Center, which will offer productions including Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, and a double bill of Steven Stucky's *The Classical Style* and Christopher Theofanidis's *Cows of Apollo* or *The Invention of Music*. Pianist Vladimir Feltsman will be giving two recitals which chart the musical Russia that formed him.

aspenmusicfestival.com

Bard SummerScape NY

June 25 – August 16

The 2015 theme for this Hudson Valley festival is the life and times of the 20th-century Mexican composer, conductor and educator Carlos Chávez, whose compositions blend Indian, Spanish and Mexican elements together with trends in European musical modernism. Other highlights include Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers*, a new chamber version of *Oklahoma!* by Rodgers and Hammerstein, and an al fresco production of Fernando Rubio's performance-installation *Everything by my side*.

fishercenter.bard.edu/summerscape

Blossom Music Festival OH

July 2 – September 6

This is the Cleveland Orchestra's annual summer festival at Ohio's Blossom Music Center. Music Director Franz Welser-Möst conducts Beethoven's Symphony No 9 on the opening night. Other highlights include Nicholas McGegan conducting a selection of baroque and classical works. Also, Gil Shaham plays Bruch's Violin Concerto No 1, and Stéphane Denève conducts for pianist Paul Lewis in his Cleveland Orchestra debut performing Schumann's Piano Concerto.

theblossommusiccenter.com
clevelandorchestra.com

Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music CA

August 2-16

Under the musical directorship of conductor Marin Alsop, this festival champions works rarely more than a year or two old, and often brand new. A particularly interesting aspect of the festival is the opportunity it gives members of the public to attend open rehearsals of the music being performed at the concerts. Full programme to be released in April.

cabrillomusic.org

Caramoor Summer Music Festival NY

June 20 – August 2

Caramoor is a country house estate in upstate New York, dedicated to music and the arts. This year it celebrates its 70th anniversary,

and the 40th anniversary of the Orchestra of St Luke's, with whom the festival has long collaborated. Its opening night will star the orchestra, conducted by Peter Oundjian, performing a new composition by Christopher Theofanidis. In the realm of opera, the festival specialises in *bel canto* repertoire. This year, they present Donizetti's *La Favorite* and Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Pianist Hélène Grimaud is Artist-in-Residence, and she will perform in the closing concert as soloist in Brahms's Piano Concerto No 1 together with the OSL.

caramoor.org

Carmel Bach Festival CA

July 16 – August 1

'Bach, Bohemia and Beyond' is this year's theme, under the artistic direction and baton of Paul Goodwin. Highlights include performances of all Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*, and a multi-work programme in which the Festival Orchestra string section will perform music from Bach to Bartók. Opera comes in the form of a special concert version of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. Bruckner and Stravinsky will be performed in Carmel Mission Basilica. Then, on the Friday evening, the orchestra will perform a new work by Benjamin Wallfisch – a festival commission – and Beethoven's Symphony No 7.

bachfestival.org

Chelsea Music Festival NY

June 12-20

In 10 Manhattan venues (including St Paul's German Lutheran Church of New York, Canoe Studios and the Leo Baeck Institute), the 2015 Chelsea Music Festival offers a 'multi-sensory exploration' of the cultures of Finland and Hungary, past and present, including Sibelius, Bartók and Kodály. Artists include Ensemble-in-Residence 'Avanti!', Finnish composers Ilari Kaila and Uljas Pulkkinen, the Tapiola Chamber Choir and Artistic Directors Ken-David Masur and Melinda Lee Masur. Theatre and food also play a role.

chelseamusicfestival.org

Festival del Sole CA

July 17-26

One for wine-lovers and gastronomes, the Festival del Sole offers ten days and 60-ish events encompassing music, dance and theatre alongside the Napa Valley's wines and gastronomy.

Performances from international musicians take place around vintner's luncheons, winery dinners, wine tastings, community concerts and wellness activities. Visiting artists this year include soprano Joyce DiDonato, baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky, violinist Midori, composer and pianist Jake Heggie, and the Russian National Orchestra.

festivaldelsole.org

Glimmerglass Festival NY

July 10 – August 23

This year is the festival's 40th anniversary, and it will be celebrating with offerings such as a new English-language adaptation by Kelley Rourke of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. There's also the first-ever Glimmerglass production of Verdi's *Macbeth*, with Artist-in-Residence Eric Owens in the title role. Other new productions are of Vivaldi's *Cato in Utica*, and Bernstein's *Candide*.

glimmerglass.org

Grand Teton Music Festival WY

July 1 – August 15

Jackson Hole is the setting each summer for seven weeks of music-making, as players from America's top orchestras come together under the baton of Music Director Donald Runnicles and other acclaimed guest-conductors including Osmo Vänskä. This year features orchestral works with visiting soloists including violinist James Ehnes, cellist Alisa Weilerstein and mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor.

gtmf.org

June in Buffalo NY

June 1-7

A festival and conference dedicated to composers, 'June in Buffalo' takes place at the University at Buffalo. Following daytime seminars, lectures, workshops and open rehearsals, evening performances feature faculty composers, resident ensembles and soloists who are internationally renowned for their interpretations of contemporary music. Each of the invited composers will have one of their pieces performed during the festival. Senior composers include Augusta Read Thomas and Brian Ferneyhough.

music21c.org

Lincoln Center Festival NY

July 6 – August 2

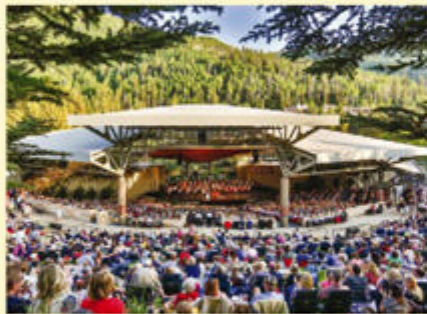
The festival opens with the first of eight Avery Fisher Hall performances

SPECTACULAR LOCATION... *Colorado*

Bravo! Vail

July 1 – August 6

Bravo! Vail brings musicians to picturesque venues throughout the Vail Valley, Colorado. It's the only festival in North America to host three major orchestras in a single season, and this year the residencies are by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic. Visiting artists include violinists Pinchas Zukerman and Midori, guest conductors Bramwell Tovey and Stéphane Denève, pianists Garrick Ohlsson and Alessio Bax, and the innovative Boston-based vocal project Roomful of Teeth. Venues and concerts range from the Orchestra Series at the Gerald R Ford Amphitheater to chamber music at the intimate Donovan Pavilion. There's also the Soirée Series, held in some of the Valley's private homes. The Festival also presents more than 20 free concerts and community engagement events. bravovail.org



GRAND TETON MUSIC FESTIVAL

in JACKSON HOLE



Photo: J.D. Scott

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of Danny Elfman's *Music from the Films of Tim Burton*, a multimedia orchestral experience. John Mauceri will lead a full orchestra and choir, with Danny Elfman making a special guest appearance. Another musical highlight will be the return of The Cleveland Orchestra to Lincoln Center, led by Franz Welser-Möst, including two performances of a concert version of Richard Strauss's rarely performed opera, *Daphne*. Contemporary music will be performed by the Queens-based chamber quartet, Yarn/Wire. lincolncenterfestival.org

Marlboro Music VT

July 18 - August 16
With pianist Dame Mitsuko Uchida as its Music Director, this rural chamber festival gives young professionals the opportunity to collaborate with mature professionals in a mentoring relationship. After three weeks of daily rehearsals, the artists present the results of their collaborations in public concerts. marlboromusic.org

Montreal Chamber Music Festival QC

June 6 - 21
The 20th outing of the Canadian event features 11 concerts around the city, including pianist Marc-André Hamelin joined by 2013 Banff competition winner, the Dover Quartet, in Franck's Piano Quintet. Elsewhere, Rachel Barton Pine explores Paganini's 24 *Caprices*, while other repertoire commemorates the two World Wars and the Holocaust. If you're quick you can catch the acclaimed Emerson String Quartet on May 2 at the pre-Festival series. festivalmontreal.org/

Mostly Mozart Festival NY

July 25 - August 22
Produced and presented by Lincoln Center, the majority of concerts feature the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra led by Music Director Louis Langrée. Composer George Benjamin will be a featured artist this year, as the Festival presents the first US staging of his opera, *Written on Skin*. Chamber and contemporary music are well covered, plus the popular 'A Little Night Music' series, late evening recitals with wine in the Stanley H Kaplan Penthouse. mostlymozart.org

Music@Menlo CA

July 17 - August 8
Schubert is the focus this year, via a chronological journey through

his music, including almost all his chamber works and a series of five Schubertiades. Artists at this specialist chamber festival include pianists Inon Barnatan and Jeffrey Kahane, the Escher String Quartet, and Festival Artistic Directors David Finckel and Wu Han. musicatmenlo.org

Music Academy of the West CA

June 15 - August 8
Founded in 1947 by soprano Lotte Lehman and conductor Otto Klemperer, Santa Barbara's Music Academy of the West is a festival and music school rolled into one. Concerts and events take place in the Academy's ocean-side campus, and in venues throughout Santa Barbara. Highlights include the New York Philharmonic's first appearance at the Santa Barbara Bowl under the orchestra's Music Director, Alan Gilbert. Opera will be offered in the shape of Rossini's comic piece *La Cenerentola*, overseen by mezzo Marilyn Horne. musicacademy.org

Ravinia Festival IL

June 15 - September 14
North America's oldest outdoor music festival marks Music Director James Conlon's final season. More than 120 events will include Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, Zemlinsky's *The Mermaid* and works by Mahler, Mozart and Shostakovich. Visiting conductors include Nikolaj Znaider, Ted Sperling and Justin Freer. Artists include pianists Garrick Ohlsson, Emanuel Ax and Lise de la Salle, soprano Karita Matilla, cellist Gary Hoffman and violinist Itzhak Perlman, and the Juilliard Quartet. ravinia.org

San Francisco Opera CA

June 7 - July 5
Summer at San Francisco Opera will open this year with the first Bay Area appearance of the David McVicar production of Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, conducted by Donald Runnicles. The cast will be headed by Anna Caterina Antonacci, Susan Graham and Bryan Hymel. Also on the bill are the world premiere of Marco Tutino's *Two Women* ('La Ciociara'), conducted by Nicola Luisotti and starring Antonacci, and Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* featuring the young bass-baritone Philippe Sly. sfopera.com

The Santa Fe Opera NM

July 3 - August 29
The season starts and ends with a new production of Donizetti's

SPECTACULAR LOCATION... *New Mexico*

Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival

July 19 - August 24

Set against the backdrop of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the festival presents six weeks of concerts, recitals, master classes, youth concerts, and open rehearsals. Artist-in-Residence is Alan Gilbert, Music Director of the NYPO. He will be conducting Messiaen's *Des canyons aux étoiles* and Mozart's *Gran Partita*. Other highlights include Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Bach's *Goldberg Variations* arranged for string trio, Brahms's Clarinet Quintet with Todd Levy, Spanish guitar music performed by Łukasz Kuropaczewski, and a piano recital by Marc-André Hamelin. New works by Alexander Goehr, Sean Shepherd and Marc Neikrug. santafechambermusic.com



The Daughter of the Regiment, conducted by Speranza Scappucci, with Anna Christy in the role of Marie. Another highlight will be the world premiere of the operatic adaptation of Charles Frazier's novel, *Cold Mountain*. With music by Jennifer Higdon and a libretto by Gene Scheer, the opera will star Isabel Leonard and Nathan Gunn. The other new productions are Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera*, Strauss's *Salome* and Verdi's *Rigoletto*. santafeopera.org

Ojai Music Festival CA

June 10-14

This year, percussionist Steven Schick will take on the role of Music Director, and be performing classics of the solo percussion repertory alongside more recent compositions by David Lang and Kaija Saariaho. The festival will open with a multimedia 90th birthday tribute to Pierre Boulez, seven-time Festival Music Director. Four concerts will be devoted to Boulez's music, each juxtaposing his works with those of Bartók — the six string quartets and, as the finale, the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion. ojaifestival.org

Savannah Voice Festival GA

August 2-16

Founded by baritone Sherrill Milnes and his wife Maria Zouves, this two-week festival celebrating the voice returns to Savannah for a third season. The Festival showcases both professional Festival artists and emerging artists from the Sherrill Milnes VOICE Programs. Topping the 2015 bill will be a fully staged

production of Bizet's *Carmen*, starring mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano. savannahvoicefestival.org

Spoleto Festival May SC

May 22 - June 7

Charleston is the host town for this multi-arts festival. Music highlights include the world premiere of a Festival-commissioned performance edition of Francesco Cavalli's baroque opera *Veremonda*, *l'amazzone di Aragona*, by early music specialist and conductor Aaron Carpenè. A second world premiere this year will be of *Paradise Interrupted*, composed by Huang Ruo, and designed and directed by Jennifer Wen Ma. Meanwhile, the chamber music series, under Artistic Director violinist Geoff Nuttall, features Composer-in-Residence Mark Applebaum, who will be composing a new work to be premiered at the Festival. spoletousa.org

Tanglewood MA

July 3 - August 16

Tanglewood is the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and this year they will be celebrating both Andris Nelson's inaugural Tanglewood season as BSO Music Director, and 75 years of the Tanglewood Music Center, the training academy for young musicians. Jacques Lacombe conducts the opening night, highlights of which will be Kirill Gerstein as soloist in Gershwin's Piano Concerto, and soprano Jessye Norman as the narrator in Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*. bsa.org

GRAMOPHONE *Reviews*

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Recording of the Month

Lindsay Kemp is invigorated by an infectious new recording of Vivaldi's landmark concertos



Vivaldi

Twelve Concertos, 'L'estro armonico', Op 3

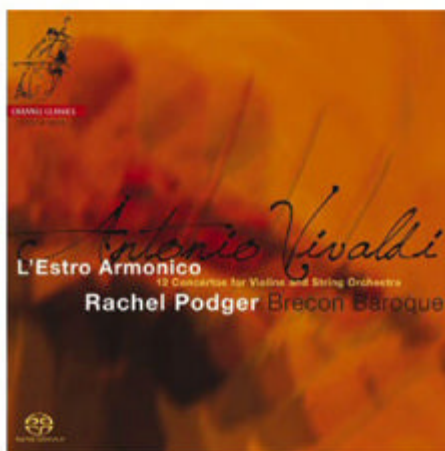
Brecon Baroque / Rachel Podger *vn*

Channel Classics ② CCSSA36515

(97' • DDD/DSD)

We hear so many Vivaldi operas these days that we may be at risk of forgetting where we came in with him. There's not much danger of *The Four Seasons* receding from our consciousness, of course, but what of *L'estro armonico*, the set of 12 concertos for four, two and single violins whose publication in 1711 first announced its composer as a major international presence? It may be my imagination, but the flow of recordings seems to have slowed in recent years. If so, that is a pity, as this is music which, when played right, can course through a room like early-morning sun. Its famously untranslatable title could hardly be more apt. For here, unmistakably, is where the spark of Vivaldi's inflammable brilliance first ignited.

Perhaps the wait has been worth it, because these one-to-a-part performances by Rachel Podger and Brecon Baroque have the heat to make your blood run faster. I don't mean heat of the hard-driven, percussive kind so often encountered today; on the contrary, line is always respected, tempos are up with the pace but never over-pushed, and the instruments are allowed to speak with warmth and humanity. There is plenty of detail, but it is natural and never fussy, and ornamentation is always clever, sometimes



'This is music which, when played right, can course through a room like the early-morning sun'

humorous, often delightful. Add to that technical excellence – the exactness with which the four violins articulate their semiquaver groups in the first movement of Concerto No 1, or the cutting precision of the scurrying continuo in the finale of No 3 – and a recorded balance that hits the perfect combination of blend and clarity, and you already have the ingredients for something memorable.

What really shoots this recording straight to the top of the pile, however, is the sheer joy of it, the spontaneity and the tireless, surging musical energy of its many sudden feints and sallies. How grippingly, for instance, the tension climbs in the often rather polite first movement of No 4; how

liltingly the off-beat theorbo strums add springy definition to the finale of No 5; and how invigoratingly the taught energy of those semiquavers in the No 3 finale finds release in a glorious chain of suspensions, and the witty interplay of the final bars spills over into a final-note twiddle that is pure natural exuberance.

Such things are what we have come to expect from Podger of course, but in these pieces her musical personality finds a home so congenial that it simply bursts from the speakers. Not that it is all uniform bonhomie, however. No 6, the best-known solo concerto of the set, is subtly drawn, with a slow movement of concentrated stillness and lyrical beauty and a gently coaxed finale that one could even consider as deliberately distanced, while No 12, with its delicate dynamics, relaxed tempos and free-spirited attitude to *rubato*, likewise creates a winsome expressive world of its own.

There is no doubt that Podger has the ability to empower the minds and bodies of the 11 players around her too, not just fellow violinists Bojan Čičić, Johannes Pramsohler and Sabine Stoffer, but violas Jane Rogers and Ricardo Cuende Isuskiza, cellist Alison McGillivray, violone-player Jan Spencer, theorbists David Miller and Daniele Caminiti and keyboard-player Marcin Świątkiewicz as well. Some of these are pupils of hers, others not, but the result is performances with a wonderful sense of mutual fun and team-play.

Tafelmusik, fielding a slightly larger orchestra, achieved similar elan in their



Air-violins at the ready: Rachel Podger proves superlatively inspirational, firing-up her Brecon Baroque colleagues in Vivaldi's *L'estro armonico*

Listening points Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

Disc 2 tracks 17-18: Concerto No 12, Largo, Allegro - entire

Effortless establishment of atmosphere: the opening *tutti* sets a leisurely pace, which Podger is not afraid to relax even more in her lovingly played solos. Listen, too, to the way the kindly second *tutti* slides effortlessly to join her at 2'50". After this enchanting movement the finale is the gentlest of play-outs

Disc 1 track 8 : Concerto No 3, Largo - 0'00"-2'08"

Typical imagination and fun from Podger as she flirts with some Byzantine ornamentation, only to be wittily echoed by Marcin Świątkiewicz's tootling, tumbling continuo.

Disc 2 track 6 : Concerto No 8, Allegro - 1'34"-2'48"

More in-the-moment fun: a solo violin lines break free, there's some spontaneous exuberance amid the communal scrubbing, and we reach the

end with an excitable rattle from the guitar and a playful upward octave skip from the violins at the end. Irresistible!

Disc 1 track 15 : Concerto No 5, Allegro - 1'30"-2'48"

These finales are really bringing out the best in Brecon Baroque; embellishments going off like little fireworks, purposeful downward stridings to climax the *tutti* paragraph, and Podger and Pramsohler in perfect accord as they quit the piece in a gloriously executed joint curlicue.

Disc 1 track 6 : Concerto No 2, Allegro - 2'05"-2'25"

We are violas and we are proud. Everyone has their moment in these vividly conversational concertos, and the violas aren't scared to take theirs on this recording: listen here to the certainty with which they cut through against the rising chromatic lines of the violins.

2007 Analekta recording of eight Op 3 concertos, but the one Brecon Baroque reminded me of most was the 1980 complete set by the Academy of Ancient Music on L'Oiseau-Lyre under Christopher Hogwood, another revelatory one-to-a-part version with a similarly happy co-operative spirit (12/81). That featured four top British Baroque violinists of the time in Monica Huggett, John Holloway, Catherine Mackintosh and Elizabeth Willcock, but though it stills stand up well today, it is easily surpassed by the rich and free-flowing musicianship of this exhilarating release. Perhaps that can be ascribed to 35 years of evolution in Baroque string-playing, but another factor is that there is probably no more inspirational musician working today than Podger, in whose company surely no violinist's bow could sleep in the hand. She certainly had me reaching for my air-violin. **G**

Orchestral



Jeremy Nicholas on a rare outing for Hummel's Oberon fantasy:

'Kirchel's response to the often melodramatic ideas and Chopinesque figurations is completely convincing' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



David Threasher reviews Haydn from Anne-Marie McDermott:

'She sprinkles a healthy helping of paprika into the Hungarian episodes in the finale of the D major Concerto' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**

JS Bach

Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-1051

Concerto Köln

Berlin Classics (M) (2) 0300593BC (89' • DDD)



No tempo direction for the first movements of Nos 1-3 and 6. By

tradition it could be a fast pace. But how fast? Hark back to Alfred Cortot (the first-ever recordings in 1931-33) and he offers the slowest speeds. That of No 3, for example, at 73 beats, lasts eight minutes. In comparison, Rinaldo Alessandrini fixes on 110 and Concerto Köln 114 – a marked upward swing across 80 years; and the trend influences all the concertos. Then there is pitch, brought down to an 'historically informed' figure varying between A=430 and 415 until Richard Egarr chose 392, French Baroque pitch used in Germany at the time. Concerto Köln follow suit.

Their playing is technically remarkable. But with few exceptions – the finales of Nos 4 and 5 which are not scurried, the *Affettuoso* of No 5 very expressive – these performances all too often reflect only a sound-facsimile of the notes. Tempos are swift but are rarely enlivening because rhythm is unyielding; and a rigid drive leaves little room for dynamic shading or varying harmonic emphasis. Certain movements – the first of No 2, the third of No 3, the first and third of No 6 – feel hustled. Some of these characteristics may be ascribed to Gerald Hambitzer, whose insistent continuo playing in, for example, the *Andante* of No 2 holds the music to the bar-lines; and in the first movement of No 4 his prominence within the ensemble is close to distraction. He is indeed impressive in the first movement of No 5 – here better balanced – but his playing seems like virtuosity for its own sake. The two chords marked *Adagio* in No 3 are decorated as is common, though Thurston Dart, peerless in his day but

now out of fashion, considered them 'a punctuation mark' and uncommonly interpolated the *Largo* from Bach's Violin Sonata, BWV1021.

Would that the few exceptions from Concerto Köln had been the norm. But the 'aesthetic deviation from the regular' that Carl Seashore believed was integral to 'the artistic expression of feeling in music' is not always a part of their intuitive impulses.

Nalen Anthoni

Selected comparisons:

Orch de l'Ecole Normale, Cortot

(4/34⁸, 11/93⁸) (EMI) 567211-2

Philomusica of London, Dart

(5/58⁸, 9/58⁸) (FORG) FR341/2

Conc Italiano, Alessandrini (11/05) (NAIV) OP30412

AAM, Egarr (6/09) (HARM) HMU80 7461/2

JS Bach

Violin Concertos – BWV1041; BWV1042; BWV1052R; BWV1056R

Capella Savaria / Zsolt Kalló *vn*

Hungaroton (P) HCD32749 (56' • DDD)



Formed in 1981, Capella Savaria has the distinction not only of being the first period orchestra in Hungary, but perhaps the first in Eastern Europe as well. Their recorded repertoire has tended to skirt round the mainstream Baroque, so no doubt it was a pleasant change for them to find themselves in the studio in the company of Bach's solo violin concertos. Note 'solo'. This is not the usual offering of the two solo concertos with the ever-glorious D minor Double; instead, what we have here is the E major and A minor as expected, plus two reconstructed concertos thought to have been originally composed for violin but which survive only in later harpsichord concerto versions (where they appear in D minor and F minor respectively). Both have been recorded plenty of times before, but this particular coupling is, I think, not so common.

First impressions of these performances are of a bright and detailed sound, backed

up by plenty of energy from the players.

After a while, however, it becomes slightly oppressive: with the soloist rather close, and the harpsichord and archlute a smidge too present in the balance. The intimacy with Zsolt Kalló's solo violin, moreover, is not always kind to him; though there is agility and quickness in his playing, it can lack grace and in places intonational accuracy, and he does rather saw at the opening bars of the D minor Concerto.

There are no interpretative quirks, beyond some unexpected but enlivening slurrings in the A minor Concerto, but I did find many of the tempos somewhat breathless, sometimes even rushed. Where Kalló does tend to get it right is in final movements, where he establishes a robustly pleasing sense of the dance. Not enough, however, to make this disc a strong recommendation. **Lindsay Kemp**

JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988 (orch Sitkovetsky)

Britten Sinfonia / Thomas Gould

Harmonia Mundi (P) (S) HMU80 7633

(73' • DDD/DSD)



To what extent is one listening to the 'arrangement' rather than the piece? It's a

question which has frequently arisen in the life of Dmitry Sitkovetsky's highly durable 1985 transcription of the *Goldbergs*.

Informed by their constant exploratory zeal in old and new terrain alike, the Britten Sinfonia shift the balance emphatically towards uncovering the breathtaking inventiveness of Bach through the vessel of the medium. If the Leopold String Trio (Hyperion, A/11) gave us a stripped-down, supercharged template of the arrangement, then this takes us on a significantly more kaleidoscopic tour.

From the baleful and mysterious opening theme (Thomas Gould's capacity for beguiling intimacy reappears, satyr-like, in



Keen rapport: pianist Mari Kodama and her husband, conductor Kent Nagano, during recording sessions for Beethoven's piano concertos

Vars 13 and 25), timbral suppleness, fizzing roulades and tight-knit dialogue predominate. Employing all repeats, this becomes a patiently unfolding set of considered perspectives, of various *tutti* and chamber textures, taken to the edge in the delicacy of articulation and luminosity of counterpoint and by an inexhaustibly ambitious fleet-of-foot ensemble celebrating Bach's mesmerising *au courant* figuration. When we reach the framing sweetness of the Fughetta and the *Canone alla quinta*, the Britten Sinfonia have established plangency and puckishness as their prime twin conceits.

The occasional default to *staccato* playing is doubtless the result of the inevitable stylistic fear of falling unguardedly into a world of dated and swooning modern-instrument Bach. It becomes, however, something of an irrelevance with the tender and vibrato-less *Canone alla sesta* (Var 18), after which the next tableau of movements reveals the individual and collective brilliance of the Britten Sinfonia's reading, not least in its heightened emotional coherence.

Such attributes lie at the heart of all memorable *Goldberg* performances. Unmissable is the desolation of the *Adagio* (Var 25), a set piece of especially

astounding refinement whose impact not even the ruddy Quodlibet denouement can diminish, especially after Thomas Gould's thoroughly lived-in final Aria. Stellar Bach-playing. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

Beethoven

Piano Concertos - No 1, Op 15^a; No 2, Op 19^a; No 3, Op 37^b; No 4, Op 58; No 5, 'Emperor', Op 73. Triple Concerto, Op 56^c

^aKolja Blacher ^{vn} Johannes Moser ^{vc}

Mari Kodama ^{pf} Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Kent Nagano

Berlin Classics (M) ③ 0300597BC (3h 31' • DDD)

From ^aAnalekta AN2 9955 (9/09); ^{bc}Berlin Classics 0300331BC (6/12)



On the evidence of this set, the husband-and-wife team of Mari Kodama and Kent

Nagano enjoy a keen musical rapport. This may not be the greatest or most pristine Beethoven piano concerto cycle on the CD market but it's pretty good. Try the bold way Kodama tackles her initial entry on the first movement of the First Concerto, while the cadenza is strongly projected (I love the cheeky little arpeggio just before the close),

even if some minor detail is lost in the fray, ie in the down figurations at around 12'55". The *Largo* is feelingly played and the closing Rondo whizzes along nicely, the odd hurried turn notwithstanding.

The first-movement cadenza of the Second Concerto is perhaps rather earthbound and I wasn't too sure about the way Kodama gate-crashes the close of the Third Concerto's initial *tutti* with her first entry. Then again, at 2'23" into the *Largo*, her handling of the second set delivers poetry to spare, while her almost imperceptible easing into the closing rondo marks a definite climate change without breaking the spell. The same CD features an affable reading of the Triple Concerto, Nagano proving himself the ideal master of ceremonies, his tempos lively but never overstretched, his manner warmly accommodating without abandoning the limelight. The opening *tutti* is a fair case in point, Johannes Moser's first entry quietly mellifluous, Kolja Blacher bowing a bright, silvery line. Thereafter we're talking chamber music writ large, both soloists sounding in happy accord, Nagano an obvious soulmate. The central 'song without words' (which is how the *Largo* has always struck me) holds fast to a sense of intimacy, the closing *Rondo alla polacca* a

perfectly happy summation, if without the smiling demeanour of, say, the Argerich, Capuçon, Maisky recording.

The Fourth Concerto is nicely done though the *Andante con moto*'s imploring central cadenza sounds a little prosaic. Best of all is the *Emperor*'s finale, which lilts along seemingly without a care in the world. Here Kodama is at her best. As to where this set stands in the firmament of great Beethoven concerto recordings, I'd say not terribly high. Pollini with Abbado, Fleisher with Szell, Aimard with Harnoncourt – to name just three obvious rival contenders – all have more to tell us about the music. **Rob Cowan**

Pf Concs – selected comparisons:

Pollini, BPO, Abbado (6/94) (DG)

439 770-2GH3 or 477 7244GM3

Aimard, COE, Harnoncourt (4/03)

(TELD) 0927 47334-2; (WARN) 2564 60602-2
or 2564 63779-2

Fleisher, Cleveland Orch, Szell

(9/13) (SONY) 88725 45997-2

Triple Conc – selected comparison:

R Capuçon, Maisky, Argerich, Svizzera Italiana Orch,
Rabinovitch-Barakovsky (9/04) (EMI) 557773-2

Berlioz

Harold en Italie, Op 16^a. La mort de Cléopâtre^b

^bKaren Cargill *mez*^a Antoine Tamestit *va*

London Symphony Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

LSO Live (M) (S) LSO0760 (63' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

November 1 & 12, 2013



These two works are impressively recorded. The sound is particularly full and

spacious; even listening on ordinary stereo equipment, Berlioz's evocative writing is fully realised – as in the gloomy mountain scenery at the start of *Harold*, and the effect of the Pilgrims' March gradually receding as evening falls.

This performance of the symphony makes an interesting contrast with another LSO Live version dating from 2003, with Colin Davis and Tabea Zimmermann (Tamestit's teacher). The sound quality here is more direct, less evocative; and though both performances are very well played, Davis imparts a greater urgency and stronger expressive character to his interpretation. In the first movement's coda, the playing is more precise, with more sense of mounting excitement, while the trombones in the finale appear more menacing. In the Pilgrims' March, there's a case for the off-key C natural bell to appear more distant, less disruptive, as with

Gergiev, but by the side of Davis, his phrasing of the Hymn seems rather too smooth and bland. There's not much to choose between the two soloists; both play beautifully. Tamestit is perhaps more of a passive observer while Zimmermann pushes herself more to the foreground, but both approaches are convincing.

Karen Cargill gives a gripping account of *The Death of Cleopatra*, clearly relishing the music's graphic portrayal of a woman in a state of mental torment. The performance gathers force as it proceeds – her slow chromatic descent as the poison takes effect is breathtaking, while Berlioz's extraordinary ending is fully realised through the brilliance of the LSO's string section. **Duncan Druce**

Harold in Italy – selected comparison:

Zimmermann, LSO, C Davis (9/03) (LSO) LSO0040

Bloch • Muhly

Bloch Schelomo. Three Jewish Poems

Muhly Cello Concerto

Zuill Bailey *vc*

Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra / Jun Märkl

Steinway & Sons (S) STNS30049 (65' • DDD)



Schelomo, concentrated and powerful, the soloist rhapsodising in a freely expressive style. Jun Märkl draws from the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra a partnership of great sensitivity and colour, and this makes a perfect prelude to Nico Muhly's Cello Concerto which follows.

This original and inspired work receives its world premiere recording here. The cello begins a long, intense soliloquy against bold string *pizzicatos*, which are taken over first by the orchestra, then the percussion, strongly directed. This leads to a brief *moto perpetuo* from the cellist. The orchestral playing softens in feeling and dissolves downwards without a break into the delicately scored, tense second movement. It becomes one long lyrical drone and ends with 'a shimmer of bells and rude brass'. The mood lightens engagingly in the finale as Märkl combines bold rhythms in the orchestral bass, with chirping minimalist woodwind, creating two lines of counterpoint. The concerto closes enigmatically, with the drums and growling brass returning and another sustained drone again superbly controlled by Märkl, yet led by the cello.

Bloch's *Three Jewish Poems* of 1911 and 1916 return to the opulence of the

orchestral writing of his early period. The first, 'Danse', balances rhythm and colour. The second, 'Rite', in the composer's words, 'is more emotional' but 'there is something solemn and distant'. The third, 'Cortège funèbre', 'is more human' and dedicated to his father's memory. Both soloist and conductor show their control with great intensity of feeling throughout, superbly recorded. **Ivan March**

Brahms

Piano Concertos^a – No 1, Op 15; No 2, Op 83.

Four Ballades, Op 10

Tzimon Barto *pf*^a Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Christoph Eschenbach

Capriccio (S) (S) C5210 (69' • DDD)



'Tzimon Barto has had such a bad press, in this country at least, one is drawn

instinctively to his side.' So wrote Robert Layton in his 'Quarterly Retrospect' in May 1990. Yet in the end he, too, could only regret that so competent a technician could be so self-regarding an interpreter, labouring Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto and pulling it perversely out of shape at every twist and turn. Solo records of music by Chopin, Liszt and Schumann followed, causing Joan Chissell to temper disappointment with the hope that there was a talent that might mature. To judge by these Brahms concerto recordings little has changed.

If a positive note is to be struck, Barto's approach makes for an atmospheric, albeit melodramatic reading of the first of the Op 10 Ballades, the narrative of the young Scot who has slain his father at his mother's behest. By contrast, the third Ballade, the *scherzo* of the set, receives a refreshingly straightforward reading. The remaining two pieces, the fourth in particular, are taken rather too slowly for comfort. And it is this – along with the fact that the Ballades are split, two apiece, across the two discs – which rules out wider recommendation. Brahms almost certainly saw the Ballades as a sequence, a point well made by such distinguished interpreters as Kempff, Katchen, Arrau, Gilels (he particularly so) and Michelangeli.

As to the concertos, here it is possible to register only dismay at the agogic distortions to which Barto subjects passages of solo exposition (his entry in the D minor First Concerto has to be heard to be believed), the lumpen brutality of many of his *fortissimos* and an unusually protracted treatment of both opening movements.

There is insight and refinement in some stretches of the D minor Concerto and during the *Più adagio* which prefaces the cello's reprise towards the end of the slow movement of the B flat Concerto. Yet such things barely compensate for larger aggravations.

Christoph Eschenbach has been a loyal Bartovite for over 25 years but the playing of the Berlin orchestra is no better than one would expect of musicians faced with accompanying performances as uneven as these. **Richard Osborne**

G Bush • Ireland • Locke

'Small Pieces for Orchestra'

G Bush Concerto for Light Orchestra.
Natus est Immanuel. Sinfonietta concertante.
Two Miniatures. Finale for a Concert
Ireland The Holy Boy^a **Locke** Psyche –
Suite (arr Bush/Harvey)

^aRaphael Wallfisch vc

Northern Chamber Orchestra / Nicholas Ward
Lyrita © SRCD341 (61' • DDD)



Geoffrey Bush
(1920-98) was still a
schoolboy at Lancing
College (and already

taking informal lessons with the composer John Ireland) when he wrote the piano piece that he later transcribed for string orchestra as *Natus est Immanuel*. Dating from 1939 and dedicated to his mother, it's a deeply touching and notably deft miniature. Completed four years later, the *Sinfonietta concertante* for cello and small orchestra was first given in September 1945 by soloist John Shinebourne with the BBC SO under Clarence Raybould. At its heart is a particularly affecting, memorably poised and loftily Bachian *Poco lento* – savoured to the full here by Raphael Wallfisch – and which in turn acts as an effective foil to the bustling athleticism of the opening movement and terse finale. Thoroughly engaging, too, are the *Two Miniatures* for strings from 1948 and Concerto for light orchestra, the latter a commission for the BBC's 1958 Light Music Festival, and whose six compact movements quote from three song anthologies by Thomas Arne.

The previous year, Bush collaborated with his good friend Francis Harvey to produce a miniature suite employing instrumental material from Matthew Locke's 1675 opera *Psyche*. That just leaves *Finale for a Concert*, a characteristically lively offering from 1964, whose crisply

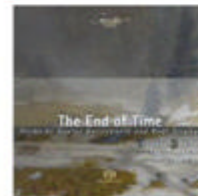
invigorating progress and friendly demeanour chime precisely – like pretty much everything on this beautifully performed Lyrita collection – with the composer's own description of his music as 'lyrical, rhythmic, economical, clear cut in texture and, as far as I can make it, direct of utterance'. Christopher Palmer's 1994 arrangement for cello and strings of John Ireland's *A Holy Boy* forms an endearing postscript. A winning release, recorded with presence and warmth. **Andrew Achenbach**

G Butterworth • Stephan

'The End of Time'

G Butterworth Two English Idylls. A Shropshire Lad: Rhapsody. The Banks of Green Willow
Stephan Music for Orchestra. Music for Seven String Instruments

Aachen Sympony Orchestra / Kazem Abdullah
Coviello © COV91418 (69' • DDD/DSD)



This recording marks the centenary of the untimely death of Rudi Stephan, a composer of remarkable talent who was killed on the Galician Front in September 1915. Two fascinating works feature here: the *Musik*



BRYAN HYMEL

Warner Classics exclusive artist



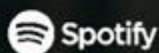
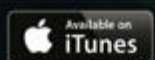
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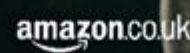
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für sieben Saiteninstrumente (1911) and the *Musik für Orchester* (1912). These works, which reflected Stephan's strongly formalist desire to allow the music to express itself without any additional descriptive appendages (hence their somewhat abstract titles), brought Stephan's name forward as one of the most promising young composers of his time. Couched in a post-Wagnerian chromatic language more redolent of Schoenberg's first period, each work has a considerable brooding intensity and emotional power, the former with its more wiry chamber polyphony, the second with its textural richness and harmonic resource.

Juxtaposed with Stephan's overt Teutonic Romanticism are George Butterworth's four orchestral works, the *Two English Idylls*, *The Banks of Green Willow* (inspired by English folksong) and the more substantial (and more harmonically advanced) rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad*. These more overtly nationalist works were composed at much the same time as Stephan's, and Butterworth died at a comparable age at the Battle of the Somme in 1916, making their inclusion that much more poignant. This is the first German recording I have heard of Butterworth's wistful masterpieces and they are interpreted with sympathy by Abdullah and the Aachen Symphony Orchestra. However, some of the composer's pointillistic scoring requires a greater clarity (especially at the climaxes), there is the odd blemish of ensemble and the orchestral sound seems rather distant. I also question the occasional tempo decision here and there: the second Idyll is a little too fast for my liking, as are parts of the rhapsody too slow. **Jeremy Dibble**

Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Concerto italiano, Op 31.

Violin Concerto No 2, 'I profeti', Op 66

Tianwa Yang *vn* **SWR Symphony Orchestra, Baden-Baden and Freiburg / Pieter-Jelle de Boer**
Naxos © 8 573135 (63' • DDD)



Tully Potter's booklet-notes accurately set the scene as far as the composition of non-operatic music in 19th-century Italy was concerned. It was with Martucci that things began to change, and 20th-century composers such as Pizzetti, Respighi, Casella and Malipiero, figures whose music has once again earned a place in public awareness thanks largely to the efforts of Chandos and Naxos, were not merely

extremely accomplished but extraordinarily fine and frequently original composers.

The younger Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Ghedini have also been creeping back into the record catalogues. Castelnuovo-Tedesco has probably been held back, unjustly, by his association with the film industry. He was a prolific writer of film scores and, though his guitar music has always retained a foothold, it is only now that his orchestral and other music has once again begun to be performed and recorded. The *Concerto italiano* is not the breezy, pseudo-Vivaldian piece that its title might suggest; indeed, it is rather a melancholic work, even the lively finale (the best movement, I think) returning to meditative introspection before its final minute or so.

The Second Violin Concerto, *I profeti*, was written for Heifetz after he had performed the *Concerto italiano*. Its three movements are each dedicated to an Old Testament prophet; it is imbued with the composer's awareness of his Jewish heritage and based on folk melodies. However, it is no harbinger of gloom: it is in fact a rather more lively and colourful work than the earlier concerto, especially the shining finale. Its glittering, singing lines certainly bring a resonant response both from soloist Tianwa Yang and the SWR Symphony Orchestra. A work that needs to be brought back into the repertoire. **Ivan Moody**

Chopin

Piano Concerto No 2, Op 21^a.

Ballade No 4, Op 52. Berceuse, Op 57.

Impromptu No 3, Op 51. Three Mazurkas, Op 50. Polonaise No 6, 'Heroic', Op 53

Nelson Freire *pf*

Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / Lionel Bringuier
Decca © 478 5332DH (66' • DDD)



Nelson Freire partners Chopin's Second Concerto (his early recording of the First

has already appeared – 11/14) with a solo recital, and those who warm to his proverbial fluency will take a particular shine to his gracefully inflected way with the Third Impromptu's elegant serpentine tracery. Elsewhere, in the Fourth Ballade, even the most tension-filled pages emerge as civilised discourse and will delight those who like their Chopin plain and simple, sleepy-eyed and unarousing. There is too little sense of occasion in the Berceuse and, again, those looking for a proud unfurling of Polish nationalism in the A flat Polonaise will search elsewhere.

Three Mazurkas are spun off with an evasive ease and if Freire's reinforcement in his first entry in the Concerto promises grater vigour, it is quickly negated. Most disappointingly, the finale's coda is roughshod, particularly when compared with scintillating alternatives by Pires and, most of all, by Freire's longtime musical partner, Martha Argerich. Again, if dash and sparkle are your thing in this particular passage, try Pogorelich. The Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra under Lionel Bringuier bring a welcome burst of character to their role; Decca's recording is outstanding but the enclosed interview is oddly tepid. For *The Guardian* (quoted on the disc inlay) Freire is as 'vivid' as he is 'uncomplicated'. 'Uncomplicated', yes; 'vivid', no. **Bryce Morrison**

Pf Conc No 2 – selected comparisons:

Argerich, Washington Nat SO, Rostropovich
(11/78^e) (DG) 477 8124GB7

Pogorelich, Chicago SO, Abbado
(12/83^e, 2/84^e) (DG) 410 507-2GH or 478 3617GB
Pires, RPO, Previn (10/94) (DG)
437 817-2GH or 479 1112GFC

Chopin • Hummel • Mozart

Chopin Krakowiak, Op 14. Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano' **Hummel** Fantasia, 'Oberons Zauberhorn', Op 116 **Mozart** Piano Concerto No 12, K414

Alexander Krichel *pf* **Polish Chamber**

Philharmonic Orchestra Sopot / Wojciech Rajski
Sony Classical © 88875 00287-2 (78' • DDD)



Four works for piano and orchestra by Chopin, Mozart and Hummel on a single

disc. Different. Intriguing. Sony signed Alexander Krichel in 2011, though the booklet makes no mention of either him, the orchestra or conductor (he was born in Hamburg in 1989, is currently studying at the RCM with Alexeev and was awarded 'the renowned ECHO Klassik as Newcomer of the Year in 2013').

The two Chopin works don't come up that often but were part of Oleg Marshev's superb complete piano-and-orchestra works reviewed in October. Krichel yields nothing to Marshev in playfulness, lyricism or bravura; and I marginally prefer Sony's closer, crisper sound and the greater finesse of the Polish players, who pack a mighty punch in the *tuttis*. On the other hand, Danacord provides useful separate tracks for the various sections of both works, which Sony does not.

Fellow fans of the great Hummel will be delighted to see him in such distinguished



Butterworth on the Rhine: Kazem Abdullah leads the Aachen Symphony Orchestra in the composer's wistful orchestral works

company. *Oberon's Magic Horn*, his 'Grosse Fantasie, Op 116', is a homage to Weber's opera rather than a potpourri and, while it may not be a masterpiece, is not without interest, especially its unusual (for 1829) central 'tempesta di mare' sequence, replete with flashings of lightning (piccolo) and lashings of diminished sevenths (piano). Krichel's response to the often melodramatic ideas and Chopinesque figurations is completely convincing and no less commanding than Christopher Hinterhuber's 2007 account on Naxos. Krichel's playing of the early A major Concerto by Hummel's teacher, which forms the centrepiece of this most enjoyable programme, is no less elegant and assured in execution and style. I look forward to hearing more of Mr Krichel.

Jeremy Nicholas

Chopin – selected comparison:

Marshev, South Denmark PO, Porcelijn

(10/14) (DANA) DACOCD701/2

Hummel – selected comparison:

Hinterhuber, Gävle SO, Grodd (2/08) (NAXO) 8 557845

Fujikura

Time Unlocked^a. Vanishing Point^a. Fifth Station^a. Grasping^a. Calling^b

^aPrague Modern / Pascal Gallois ^bbn

Stradivarius © STR33972 (62' • DDD)



Dai Fujikura (b1977) is a prolific composer with an already impressive

discography, his work having been performed by ensembles throughout Europe. This monographic recording features Prague Modern, an ensemble that's new to me but whose performances have an unassuming authority.

All the works on this recording were completed in the past decade and hover round the 12-minute mark, though the forces involved are varied, ranging from solo bassoon (*Calling*, performed by conductor Pascal Gallois himself, on bassoon) to string orchestra (*Grasping*) and large ensemble (*Vanishing Point*), with smaller mixed chamber formations in between (*Time Unlocked*, *Fifth Station*, the latter a miniature cello concerto in all but name). The duality between active and contemplative, colouristic or textural passages is a strongly marked feature of most of these works, the resultant chopping and changing a familiar gambit, perhaps, but handled with great confidence. Most pleasing in this regard is *Time Unlocked*, a

mixed sextet that has at least one of the cardinal virtues in chamber music, that of sounding as though more instruments are involved than there actually are. The work that stands outside this dual template is *Grasping*, which dwells on the string orchestra's lush, more rhapsodic side. Also worth hearing is Gallois's performance of *Calling*, though the potential of those gorgeous bassoon multiphonics might have been pursued to still greater purpose. **Fabrice Fitch**

Geminiani • Handel

'Bewitched'

Geminiani Concerto grosso, 'La follia' (after Corelli Op 5 No 12). La forest enchantée

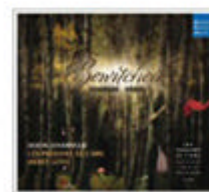
Handel Dietro l'orme fugaci (Armida abbandonata), HWV105^a

^aRobin Johannsen sop

Les Passions de l'Âme / Meret Lüthi

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88843 04088-2

(60' • DDD)



There is no direct evidence that Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762) studied with Corelli in Rome. We can safely say he

was an ardent disciple, not least because he produced an imaginative collection of six concerto grosso arrangements modelled on his hero's Op 5 Violin Sonatas. Printed in London in 1726, the most famous piece is Geminiani's orchestrated version of Corelli's variations on *La follia*, which receives a robust and vividly exaggerated performance from Les Passions de l'Ame. Meret Lüthi plays the principal violin part with commendable fantasy and nurtures scintillating textures in some extraordinary quiet variations. Contrasting louder variations are abrasive but there is certainly no whiff of complacency in this spirited account.

La forest enchantée was produced many years later for a pantomime based on Tasso's poem *Gerusalemme liberata* at Paris's Théâtre des Tuileries in 1754, and on Geminiani's return to Britain he performed and published a concert version. Including flutes, horns and trumpet, the music is infused with French dance, which shows a side of Geminiani that those only familiar with his Corellian concerti grossi would not suspect. Entertaining, varied and masterly, *The Inhabited Forest* (as it was known in England) has not been recorded as often as it deserves, so these lively performances are welcome – occasional bluntness and imperfections make this sound like a real performance rather than a studio product edited into infinity, but perhaps Les Passions de l'Ame are reigniting a conversation rather than offering the last word. Handel's Roman cantata *Armida abbandonata* (also based on Tasso) functions as an interlude; Armida's oscillating emotions as she watches Rinaldo's ship sail away are sung with attractive sensitivity by Robin Johannsen.

David Vickers

Haydn

Piano Concertos^a – HobXVIII/4; HobXVIII/11.
Piano Sonatas – HobXVI/20; HobXVI/23;
HobXVI/40; HobXVI/50; HobXVI/52

Anne-Marie McDermott *pf*

^aOdense Symphony Orchestra / Scott Yoo
Bridge Ⓢ ② BRIDGE9438 (140' • DDD)



Anne-Marie McDermott relishes Haydn's fingery writing in this

selection of sonatas and concertos, vividly inflecting phrases and taking an imaginative approach to ornaments and dynamics. She sprinkles a healthy helping of paprika into the Hungarian episodes in the finale of the D major Concerto (No 11) but it is the

earlier of the two concertos here, No 4, that will perhaps be most interesting to Haydnistas. Usually recorded with an accompaniment of just strings, Scott Yoo and his Danish orchestra deploy oboes as well – presumably from a contemporary (albeit inauthentic or doubtful) edition. Not only that, but brand-new cadenzas are provided by Charles Wuorinen, who writes in a note that he has 'long admired' McDermott's 'unsurpassed performances' of Haydn.

Thoroughly decent they are, too, and an excellent place to start if you're coming to this music anew. The concertos have been well served on disc recently, with standard-setting recordings from Leif Ove Andsnes, Marc-André Hamelin and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. Each of these, though, presents the concertos on a single disc, and offers also the F major Concerto (No 3), thus coupling the three undoubtedly authentic Haydn keyboard concertos together. Lovers of this music will also have been collecting Bavouzet's and Hamelin's continuing traversals of the sonatas, also benchmarks in their contrasting ways – not to mention the longtime standard recording of the complete sonatas by the late John McCabe. **David Thresher**

Pf Concs – selected comparisons:

Andsnes, Norwegian CO (4/00) (EMI) 556960-2

Hamelin, Vns du Roy, Labadie (5/13) (HYPE) CDA67925

Bavouzet, Manchester Camerata, Takács-Nagy (9/14) (CHAN) CHAN10808

Pf Sons – selected comparisons:

McCabe (12/95) (DECC) 443 785-2L/C12

Hamelin (5/07, 8/12) (HYPE) CDA67554, CDA67882

Bavouzet (12/11, 11/12, 7/13) (CHAN)

CHAN10689, CHAN10736, CHAN10763

Haydn

Symphonies – No 57^a; No 67^a; No 68^b

Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra /
Nicholas McGegan

Philharmonia Baroque Ⓢ PBPO8 (78' • DDD)

Recorded live at First Congregational Baptist Church, Berkeley, CA, USA, on ^bFebruary 8-9, 2014;

^aOctober 11-12, 2014



Nicholas McGegan and his San Francisco-based forces delve into a trio of symphonies that have been largely neglected outside of complete cycles. They don't have the stark dramatics of *Sturm und Drang* to recommend them; and they are neither suitably early to demonstrate the seeds of future achievements nor suitably late to show mature mastery. Nevertheless, each is fascinating in its own way. Lighter in tone

than certain symphonies of the preceding decade, No 57 (1774) features a slow movement that alternates plucked and bowed phrases, a Ländler-like Minuet and a frenzied tarantella finale. No 67, from a year or two later, is possibly an assemblage of pieces of theatrical music, the Trio of its minuet deploying two solo violins, the second with its lower string tuned down a tone to provide a rustic drone. Both have been recorded on period instruments before, in Christopher Hogwood's sporadically available aborted cycle (L'Oiseau-Lyre, 5/98, 9/99), but these live performances are a touch grittier, less manicured – and with suitably prominent horn parts.

Symphony No 68 is a slightly different matter. It is a favourite of Harnoncourt's (it is appended to his 'London' Symphonies set), perhaps because of its elevated eccentricities: the timebomb-tick of the slow movement, with its gathering rhythmic momentum, and the amusing distractions of the finale. Interestingly, while second-half repeats are not observed in the two earlier symphonies, in No 68 all repeats are observed. It's the best of the three symphonies, so it's good to hear more of it, but a black mark for inconsistency nonetheless. (On the other hand, it means three symphonies fit on a single disc.) McGegan is no mean Haydn conductor; I wonder if he might soon turn to Symphonies Nos 79 and 81 – the only two of the 106 yet to be recorded on period instruments – before someone else beats him to it. **David Thresher**

Mendelssohn

Symphony No 2, 'Hymn of Praise', Op 52^a.

Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt, Op 27

^aSophie Bevan, ^aMary Bevan *sops* ^aBenjamin Hulett *ten* City of Birmingham Symphony ^aChorus and Orchestra / Edward Gardner

Chandos Ⓢ CHSA5151 (134' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Putting this CD on 'blind', and not expecting a CD fill-up to this of all

symphonies, the gently sustained opening chords of *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* greeted my ears like a prayer. Not that the heraldic motto that opens *Hymn of Praise* wouldn't have been welcome, just that in my view *Calm Sea* is one of Mendelssohn's most evocative pieces, second only to *The Hebrides* (which it occasionally resembles, ie at around 3'30" into tr 2), and Edward Gardner conducts a most sensitive performance, making light of the *Allegro*

maestoso main body of the piece, the playing of the CBSO refreshingly spirited but fairly soft-grained.

Back in Mendelssohn's day the Second Symphony enjoyed great success in Birmingham, to the extent that the finale's Lutheran chorale 'Nun danket alle Gott' ('Let all men praise the Lord', as here) brought the audience to its feet. The problem with Mendelssohn's Second Symphony (in reality his Fourth) is that in the wrong hands it can sound portentous; but here, because textures are kept transparent, overall dynamics relatively low-key – at least in the first three movements – and the tempos are constantly mobile, it sheds its Victorian drapery and becomes precisely what it is, an airborne 'hymn of praise'. The anticipatory three-movement Sinfonia that has led so many to liken the work to Beethoven's Ninth acts as a preparation for the great choral exclamation 'All men, all things, all that has life and breath, sing to the Lord, Hallelujah...', one of the most exhilarating moments in all of Mendelssohn, very well sung here though not especially exultant.

Turn to Thomas Fey with the Deutsche Kammerchor and the Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra, and the moment is marked with a greater sense of occasion though, come 'Nun danket alle Gott', Fey's tempo is virtually half that chosen by Gardner. Jan Willem de Vriend's recording also keeps to a low calorie count while holding fast the sense of awe that was surely part of Mendelssohn's prompting inspiration. Mention should also be made of the Kammerchor Stuttgart and Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen under Frieder Bernius.

Gardner stresses what over the years we have come to consider the more purely Mendelssohnian attributes, Apollonian qualities such as lightness, line and overall beauty of form, hence the fact he holds the finale's various sections together with great skill: there are no unseemly bumps as one leads to another and his vocal team is excellent, the sisters Mary and Sophie Bevan especially, not to mention the excellent chorus. Superb sound, too, the best place to sample being the thrilling seventh number of the finale, 'The night is departing', with its very audible organ. A fine production all round, certainly if you want the work sung in English, though for me Fey and de Vriend, whose versions are also in excellent sound, just about pip Gardner to the post, principally because of their marginally higher levels of engagement. Remember though that first-rate fill-up, almost worth the price of the disc alone. **Rob Cowan**

Sym No 2 – selected comparisons:

Deutsche Kammerphilh Bremen, Bernius

(9/09) (CARU) CARUS83 213

Heidelberg SO, Fey (6/10) (HANS) CD98 577

Netherlands SO, de Vriend (5/13) (CHAL) CC72543

Moss

D'un silence...^a. Loneliness^b

^bJadwiga Rappé *contr* ^aJean-Marc Fessard *cl/bcl*

Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra /

^aMichał Klauza, ^bJerzy Maksymiuk

Dux © DUX1118 (68' • DDD • T)



Chances are that Piotr Moss is the most notable living French composer born in

Poland. Now in his mid-sixties, he studied with such luminaries as Bacewicz and Penderecki before heading to Paris, where he was guided by the redoubtable Nadia Boulanger, and where he has resided since 1981. The two pieces here confirm a predilection for large-scale forms and an overtly (if not unduly) serious manner of expression. *D'un silence* (1989) is a concerto for clarinet (with recourse to bass clarinet) and an orchestra rich in timbral and textural possibilities. Its 38 minutes take in several contrasted sections, with the rhythms of the oberek and the waltz often evident. The result is a discursive yet focused entity as affords the soloist prominence within a symphonic conception, and in which Jean-Marc Fessard acquits himself with aplomb.

If the song-cycle *Loneliness* (2008) is less convincing, this is not through lack of conviction on the composer's part; rather that the sequence of texts offers little in the way of a sustained or cumulative experience, and Moss's identity with the pathos of ee cummings's verse at the expense of the wistful humour informing even his most confessional musings. There is much eloquent expression even so, with Moss's opting to set the poems in English vindicated by his feeling for their rhythmic scansion – not least as rendered by Jadwiga Rappé, whose English is rarely unidiomatic. The recording is warm and immediate, while the booklet features texts and Polish translations, along with succinct introductions to both pieces. As what will likely be most people's first contact with the composer, this disc can be cordially recommended. **Richard Whitehouse**

Mozart

Violin Concertos – No 1, K207; No 5, K219.

Sinfonia concertante, K364^a

Vilde Frang *vn* ^aMaxim Rysanov *va*





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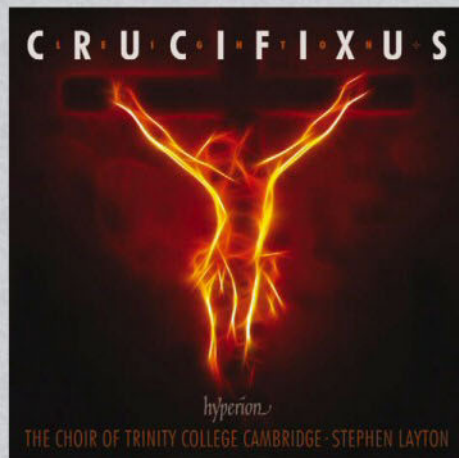
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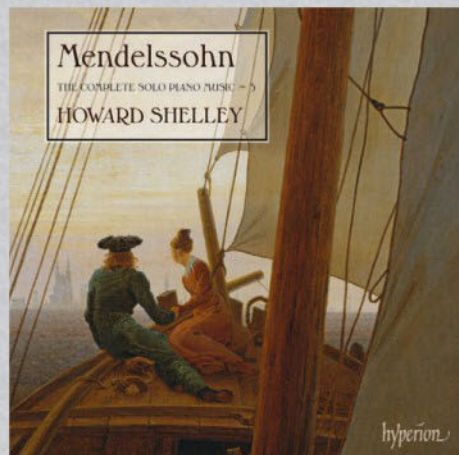
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Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen

Warner Classics © 2564 62767-7 (77' • DDD)

Mozart • Vieuxtemps

Mozart Violin Concerto No 5, K219

Vieuxtemps Violin Concerto No 4, Op 31

Hilary Hahn *vn* Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie
Bremen / Paavo Järvi

DG © 479 3956GH (60' • DDD)



Having previously heard Vilde Frang playing Romantic and 20th-century music, I was delighted to discover that the vitality and sense of freedom she brings to later music is preserved in Mozart; she adopts an airy, graceful style, confining any intense *sostenuto* to especially expressive moments in slow movements and lyrical episodes. This, along with imagining in detail how to bring out the individuality of each phrase, results in performances that compel the attention and, in the quicker movements, expose all the wit of Mozart's youthful imagination. In the two solo concertos' finales, the playing is at times excitingly fiery (especially in the Turkish episode in K219). For the *Sinfonia concertante*, Frang finds an equally vivacious partner in Maxim Rysanov; the two written-out cadenzas are most imaginatively played and the controlled brilliance of the finale is irresistible.

Generally, Arcangelo and Jonathan Cohen give lively support, though occasionally the balance isn't quite right – the first violins in the opening *tutti* of the *Sinfonia* are not always strong enough. But at the start of the following *Andante* the scene is perfectly set for this sombre movement, by having the second violins playing just as strongly as the firsts.

Paavo Järvi and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie provide wonderful accompaniments for Hilary Hahn – always finely balanced and expressive, and, in the Vieuxtemps, providing the necessary elements of drama and emotional colour. Hahn explains the surprising combination of these two composers: both works played an important role in her development as a violinist. Her Mozart is elegant, stylish and played throughout with beautiful tone, while lacking something of Frang's individuality and fantasy. The Vieuxtemps, though, is remarkable, with Hahn playing the role of melodramatic protagonist to perfection; she has a powerful presence and, in the finale, finds a truly heroic tone.

The *Scherzo*, after listening to Viviane Hagner's scintillating account, sounds maybe a touch too careful, though its pastoral Trio brings some lovely dialogue with horns, oboes and flute. But the performance as a whole, bold in its freedom and air of conviction, would surely have delighted its composer. **Duncan Druce**

Vieuxtemps – selected comparison:

Hagner, Royal Flemish PO, Brabbin

(7/10) (HYPE) CDA67798

Mussorgsky

Pictures at an Exhibition (orch Ravel). Songs and Dances of Death (orch Shostakovich)^a.

A Night on the Bare Mountain

^aFerruccio Furlanetto *bass*

Mariinsky Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

Mariinsky (M) © MAR0553 (68' • DDD/DSD)



There are now at least 20 orchestrations of Mussorgsky's *Pictures*, a good half of which have been recorded, but Ravel's brilliant if somewhat prettified version continues to be the one to which conductors turn again and again. It suits Gergiev's approach, which is surprisingly mild with some of the characterisation. 'Gnomus' is agile rather than grotesque; 'The Old Castle' sorrowful (with a nicely mournful saxophone solo) rather than haunted; 'Baba-Yaga' grotesque but hardly alarming; and the children quarrelling in the 'Tuileries' seem lively and impeccably behaved. The cattle of 'Bydło' slouch along well, to a fine ponderous tuba solo (though the muted horn echo near the end is barely audible). 'Two Jews, Rich and Poor', which can seem unpleasantly smug and snivelling in Ravel, is less so in the piano original; and Victor Hartmann's two paintings are actually each of them in their way both dignified and touching, something Gergiev emphasises. He is in his element in the 'Catacombs' and with the grandeur of 'The Great Gate of Kiev'.

It seems strange to have chosen an Italian for the quintessentially Russian *Songs and Dances of Death* but Furlanetto has Russian credentials (as Boris Godunov, no less), and he follows Gergiev in singing a touching lullaby for the dying child; while if the drunken peasant is a little heavy-heeled with his trepak, Field Marshal Death drills his troops chillingly (the four-language notes do not, culpably, find room for texts and translations). *A Night on the Bare Mountain* is splendidly macabre, one of the best performances on this rather mixed collection. **John Warrack**

Prokofiev • Shostakovich

Prokofiev Cello Concerto, Op 58^a. Music for Children, Op 65 – March (arr Piatigorsky)^b

Shostakovich Cello Concerto No 1, Op 107^c

Steven Isserlis *vc* ^aFrankfurt Radio

Symphony Orchestra / Paavo Järvi

Hyperion © CDA68037 (65' • DDD)

^{ab}Recorded live at the Alte Oper, Frankfurt, December 12 & 13, 2013



Prokofiev's demanding, conceptually lopsided Cello Concerto, failed

at the box office and has been little heard. Indeed, the only significant on-disc competition for Steven Isserlis's blazing live account comes from the 2000 recording made by the late Alexander Ivashkin. With a Russian cellist and orchestra, the music sounds deceptively 'Soviet' so that we experience it counterfactually as a variant of the entity it would become years later when refashioned for Mstislav Rostropovich as the *Symphony-Concerto*, Op 125. Isserlis's reading may yet mark a step change in the reception history of the 1930s original. No matter that Paavo Järvi's accompaniment feels super-efficient rather than comparably spontaneous. Applause is excised.

While you might not consider the hard-edged companion concerto a natural Isserlis piece, the cellist has played it a good deal. Distinctly brisk, except in the initial *Allegretto*, the new studio interpretation is flexible rather than lightweight or disconnected in feeling, with no lack of soulful emoting. In the first movement Isserlis conjures some surprising, visceral sounds from his instrument, ratcheting up the tension with a febrile, nervy vibrato up high. Being less comatose than usual, the second movement can afford to proceed in longer breaths, the not-quite-immaculate solo line spurning vibrato one moment, sliding romantically the next.

Yes, Rostropovich was grand and implacable, more lyrical too in a sense, but you'll have one or other of his Shostakovich recordings already and he was understandably committed to the revamped version of the Prokofiev. The present disc has its own built-in encore, as arranged by Gregor Piatigorsky, the émigré virtuoso for whom Prokofiev began his concerto and with whom Isserlis himself intended to study. The soloist contributes his own lively and individualistic booklet-notes, enhancing the value of a fascinating, I'd say unmissable project. Sympathetic miking ensures that his relatively modest sound is

CHANDOS

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David Gutman

Prokofiev Vc Conc – selected comparison:

Ivasbkin, Russian St SO, Polyansky

(7/01^R) (CHAN) CHAN241-41

Shostakovich – selected comparison:

Isserlis, Mahler CO, Currentzis

(1/15) (EURO) DVD 205 9818

Saint-Saëns

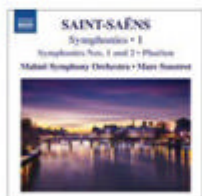
'Symphonies, Vol 1'

Symphonies – No 1, Op 2; No 2, Op 55.

Phaëton, Op 39

Malmö Symphony Orchestra / Marc Soustrot

Naxos 8 573138 (66' • DDD)



Jean Martinon's recordings of all five Saint-Saëns

symphonies with the

Orchestre National de l'ORTF remain a benchmark, having survived in the catalogue in one format or another since the 1970s. But now the Malmö Symphony Orchestra under the French conductor Marc Soustrot is mounting a challenge with a coupling of the First and Second Symphonies as the opening salvo of a projected three-disc complete set. Both works amply illustrate why the Third (*Organ*) Symphony is the only one to have achieved any lasting success. The First Symphony in E flat, composed in 1853 when Saint-Saëns was still in his late teens, represents an accomplished assimilation of Mendelssohnian ideas while lacking a sustained impulse or sharpness of focus to fix it firmly in the mind: unlike the close-knit *Organ* Symphony, it is not always obvious why the four movements of the First belong with one another.

The Second, written in 1859, is more arresting, not least because the main part of the first movement embraces a strict fugue and other devices and gestures that suggest proto-Brahms, though Brahms's own First Symphony was still years away from completion. Beethoven seems to be the guiding force behind the finale. This pairing, well played by the Swedish orchestra, shows Saint-Saëns flexing his symphonic muscles and, particularly in the Second Symphony, showing glimpses of those gifts for orchestration that were to manifest themselves fully later on – notably in the symphonic poem *Phaëton*, which is where this disc rises above the interesting to the truly stimulating. **Geoffrey Norris**

Syms – selected comparisons:

ORTF Nat Orch, Martinon (1/74^R, 11/75^R, 5/76^R)

(EMI) 5851862 or 0852052; (BRIL) 94360

Schnittke

Symphony No 3

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Vladimir Jurowski

Pentatone PTC5186 485 (52' • DDD/DSD)



Since its first performance in 1981, Schnittke's Third Symphony has

attracted much attention as well as two recordings, conducted by Gennady Rozhdestvensky (Melodiya – nla) and Eri Klas (BIS, 8/90). It has all the attributes of a 'late' work, not in Schnittke's output – he was in his mid-forties when he wrote it and had 17 years to live – but in the history of European music. Buried in its expanses are allusions to at least two dozen composers, from Bach, especially, then by way of the extraordinary opening recomposition of the E flat chord that opened *The Ring* to references to Eisler, Dessau, Kagel and Stockhausen, and others that certainly escaped the present reviewer.

How much, then, is one intended to recognise and to have references stirred awake? These will in any case have different meanings for each listener. Rather, I think, it is music that calls upon such concepts as the primeval stirring of form, including musical form, evoked by Wagner, and a multiplicity of other conditions of Western music, such as an innocence embodied in a reference to a Mozart piano sonata, the destructiveness wrought by the elevation of the trivial, the value of real humour in music, much more. As the work was written for Leipzig (the reopening of the Gewandhaus), the great name of Bach is evoked in a musical spelling that has been currency since his own use of it, but there are also ciphers much more deeply buried, some of which are elucidated in the programme booklet.

So what matters is whether someone knowing little or nothing of all this would find the work satisfactory. Certainly it is impressive; but of course it is enriched by the recognition of allusions and by awareness that as a 'late' work it looks back, and gathers some of its strength from almost private references, even jokes, that have stimulated Schnittke's imagination. It is certainly not a work for every day. But it is music well worth hearing and taking note of, as our classical tradition lies under threat from various quarters; and no praise is too high for the vigour, the force and the clarity of this performance and recording.

John Warrack

Silvestrov

Spectrums^a. Symphony No 2^b. Cantata (1973)^c.

Meditation^d. 'Farewell, O World...!'^e

^aNelly Lee sop ^eYuri Olijnik bar ^dValentin

Potapov vc ^aEnsemble of Solists of Leningrad

Philharmonic Orchestra; ^bLeningrad Chamber

Orchestra; ^cChamber Orchestra 'Perpetuum

Mobile'; ^dKiev Chamber Orchestra; ^echamber

ensemble / Igor Blazhkov

Wergo WER6731-2 (76' • ^aab^dADD/^ceDDD)

Recorded live ^a1965, ^b1968, ^d1976;

recorded ^c1983, ^e1991



Especially in the first half of his career, Valentin Silvestrov

was fond of calling all

manner of music 'symphony'. In 1965 his *Spectrums* – described as a symphony in three movements for chamber orchestra – made quite a splash in Leningrad, and it is indeed a talented example of Nono-esque pointillism (Nono's visit to the Soviet Union in 1963 had been a highly significant catalyst for young composers there) with a colouristic sensitivity as befits the title. But a symphony in the sense of something greater than the sum of its parts? Hardly. No more so is the 11-minute numbered Second Symphony, from the same year and in the same style, for which the composer's own poetic description is perfectly adequate: 'a madrigal without words, through which a melodic wind blows'.

The longest work on the disc, the *Meditation* symphony for cello and chamber orchestra, is not only wholly unsymphonic by traditional lights but also hardly meditative (except, perhaps, in the sense of gradually moving from jaggedness to passivity); and, unless you were following a score or seeing a performance with the cello in concerto position, you would scarcely guess that there was a soloist involved at all. Nevertheless, for all its uncertainty of voice, the piece remains a fascinating document of a period of transition from Silvestrov's post-Webernian early years through mild polystylism to the fragile, aching neo-romanticism that has been his speciality for the past 30 years.

The Cantata to words by Tyutchev and Blok is not enhanced by the less-than-dulcet tones of Nelly Kim (though her bravery as one of the few singers in Soviet times capable of tackling contemporary repertoire should not be underestimated); it is heard to better advantage on the rival Megadisc version. Similarly, anyone who has the Symphony No 2 and *Meditation* on Olympia need not trade them in for the

Wergo recordings. The latter are mainly historic accounts from the 1960s and '70s, conducted by Igor Blazhkov – himself a real hero of the struggle for contemporary music in the Soviet Union. They have a raw, communicative edge and are very much better than nothing, but they are also, to say the least, variable in their precision, drily recorded and accompanied by a fair amount of audience noise.

David Fanning

Sym No 2, Meditation – selected comparison:

Musica Viva, Rudin (7/96) (OLYM) OCD477

Cantata – selected comparison:

Stovbun, Kiev Camerata, Baley (1/03) (MEGA) MDC7842

R Strauss

Don Juan, Op 20. Ein Heldenleben, Op 40

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik © 900127 (65' • DDD)



Take a fine orchestra, an effective 'shoebox' acoustic (in this case the Herkulesaal in

Munich), an expert team of engineers and a sympathetic conductor who knows what he's about – working successfully with what he has at his disposal – and Strauss's best tone-poems can hardly fail. Or at least their kaleidoscopic array of orchestral colours can't, though whether they ignite to the point of a full-blown conflagration is down to the conductor's temperament. With Mariss Jansons, they sometimes do.

Jansons is not an especially combustible Straussian but he certainly has an ear for the colours. His performances are more along the lines of the composer's own, patient and relatively straitlaced, though his Royal Concertgebouw recording of *Ein Heldenleben*, which is conceptually very similar to the version presented here, has rather more edge. *Don Juan* opens broadly, with warmth to spare (compare Fritz Reiner in 1954, all brawn and fighting talk), the big centrally placed horn theme superbly played, the action thereafter dramatic and very well paced. *Heldenleben* suggests a cool hero-about-town rather than an impulsive ego-led hothead, or an amorous hero (ie Daniel Barenboim with Staatskapelle Berlin, DG), an impression that registers right from the opening portrait of 'The Hero'. 'The Battle' is imposingly dynamic, the bass drum thumping away in clear perspective within the rest of the orchestra (more imposing than at the Concertgebouw), all desks perfectly audible – a masterly example of fine balancing, both from the rostrum and

from the control room. 'The Hero's Works of Peace' really come into their own when the drama sets in (the opening section is just a mite under-characterised). 'The Hero's Retirement from this World and Consummation' is gently played, quietly expressive rather than especially impassioned, though the closing *Zarathustra* reference is majestic beyond belief.

To be truthful, I'm not sure. Musical, yes, colour-conscious, again, yes...both performances deliver on both counts in spades, but excitement? Christian Thielemann and the Vienna Philharmonic are pretty impressive in that respect and so is Andris Nelsons and the CBSO; and of course there's the 'old guard', Reiner in Chicago coming tops, certainly in the stereo league, and Clemens Krauss with the VPO for 'mono tape', with Willem Mengelberg in New York for 'crusty shellac' – still to my mind the greatest *Heldenleben* ever recorded. This second Jansons version is good, at times very good, but not quite memorable enough to be a serious contender. **Rob Cowan**

Heldenleben – selected comparisons:

NYPO, Mengelberg (10/31st) (NAXO) 8 110161

VPO, Krauss (12/52nd, 9/14) (DECC) 478 6493DC5

Chicago SO, Reiner (6/55th) (RCA) 88697 68699-2

or 88883 79863-2; (RCA) 88883 79055-2

VPO, Thielemann (11/03) (DG)

474 192-2GH or 479 1426GM2

CBSO, Nelsons (4/10) (ORFÉ) CS03 091A

Staatskapelle Berlin, Barenboim (1/15) (DG) 479 3964GH

RCO, Jansons (RCO) RCO04005

Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring (original 1913 version and 1967 concert version)

Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra / David Zinman

RCA Red Seal © 2 88843 09546-2 (70' • DDD)



Just in case anyone else felt minded to replicate this *Rite of Spring* project, the packaging prints an admonitory sentence: 'The 1967 edition published by Boosey & Hawkes remains the sole authorised edition for general performance.' David Zinman and the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra couple that permissible version here with Stravinsky's original score of 1913, which differs in all manner of details, both textural and instrumental. Ideally one would have both discs playing simultaneously to identify precisely where all the changes lie; but, if you have the definitive score in your head, the earlier one certainly sounds different enough to

make comparisons worthwhile and to lend this venture a purpose.

The best course is perhaps to turn first of all to tr17 on the second disc, where Zinman is interviewed (in English, and then translated into German) about various points such as the less brutal down-beats in the 'Danse des adolescentes' in the first version as compared with that of 1967. All sorts of other changes were made either in the interests of intensifying the savagery or of enhancing the clarity of definition. Zinman worked with Pierre Monteux, who conducted the famously turbulent premiere of *The Rite of Spring* on that momentous night of May 29, 1913. Through his connections he traces a direct line back to the time when the ballet was new, and his perceptive conducting here makes for a thoroughly musical as well as a fascinating documentary set, supplemented by a wealth of information in the booklet. **Geoffrey Norris**

Tchaikovsky

Variations on a Roco Theme, Op 33

(original and revised versions).

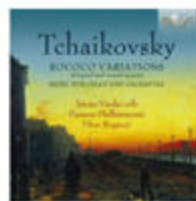
Nocturne, Op 19 No 4. Pezzo capriccioso,

Op 62. Andante cantabile, Op 11

István Várdai vc

Pannon Philharmonic Orchestra / Tibor Bogányi

Brilliant © 94876 (55' • DDD)



'Deplorably corrupt' is how Tchaikovsky's biographer, David Brown, describes the draconian alterations made to the *Roco* Variations by the work's dedicatee, Wilhelm Fitzenhagen. It's a sorry tale: the German cellist effectively duped the publisher Jurgenson into believing that his wholesale and self-serving changes had already met with Tchaikovsky's approval; in fact, they play havoc with the canny pacing and judicious proportions of the composer's meticulously crafted original scheme, while jettisoning some enchanting music entirely, not least the agile eighth variation that leads straight into the coda (try from 16'54").

Certainly, the present superb performance triumphantly vindicates Tchaikovsky's first thoughts. Not yet 30, the young Hungarian virtuoso István Várdai has been garnering plenty of prizes and plaudits of late, and his outstandingly fine contribution marries a gratifyingly sumptuous and varied tonal palette to a flawless technical address – that we shall be hearing a lot more from him I have not the slightest doubt. Both here and in the work's more familiar revision Várdai is most

sympathetically partnered by the Pannon Philharmonic under Tibor Bogányi, and the fill-ups are just as enjoyable, with the Nocturne (whose secondary melody Stravinsky incorporated into his 1928 ballet *Le baiser de la fée*) sounding especially gorgeous. There are, however, a sprinkling of rather self-consciously flashy departures from the solo part in the *Pezzo capriccioso* that I don't see in the 1888 printed score: were they perhaps added by Anatoly Brandukov (for whom this charming piece was fashioned)?

No matter, this remains excitingly assured and agreeably spontaneous music-making, ripely engineered and sympathetically balanced. Worth a punt at Brilliant's price, I'd say. **Andrew Achenbach**

Torroba

'Guitar Concertos, Vol 1'

Aires de La Mancha^a. Concierto en Flamenco^b.
Diálogos^c. Suite castellana^d

^a**Pepe Romero**, ^{cd}**Vicente Coves** *gtr*

^{ac}**Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra / Manuel Coves**
Naxos © 8 573255 (77' • DDD)



The Spanish composer, conductor and impresario Federico Moreno

Torroba (1891-1982) was hugely prolific throughout his long life, writing in a tuneful, nationalist style which drew on both folk and classical traditions. In his day he was most famous for his zarzuelas; in ours, he is most famous for his nearly 100 guitar works, most of which were written for Andrés Segovia. Of those guitar works, 10 were concertos. The present recording, the first of three volumes devoted to the guitar concertos, presents two of them, along with two suites for solo guitar.

Torroba wrote two concertos dedicated to flamenco guitarists, the first of which was the *Concierto en Flamenco* of 1962, written for the legendary flamenco guitarist Sabicas and which here receives its first recording. By contrast, the *Diálogos entre guitarra y orquesta*, written for Segovia in the 1960s but revised in 1977 and first recorded, by Pepe Romero, in 1980, is more strictly classical, if not neo-classical, but with flashes of Spanish fire.

In the first, Pepe Romero again proves himself a master of both flamenco and classical, relishing the lyricism of the 'Alegrías de Cádiz' as much as the *rasgueado*, *tremolo* and rapid triplets which thunder and streak across a rich orchestral backdrop, realised with equal passion by

the Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra under Manuel Coves; in the second, Vicenete Coves echoes Torroba's orchestration by clothing the somewhat wistful guitar-writing in muted washes of colour. *Aires de La Mancha* and the oft-recorded *Suite castellana*, sensitively performed by Romero and Coves respectively, make attractive pendants. **William Yeoman**

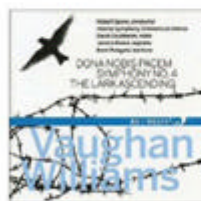
Vaughan Williams

Symphony No 4. Dona nobis pacem^a.

The Lark Ascending^b

^a**Jessica Rivera** *sop* ^a**Brett Polegato** *bar* ^b**David Coucheron** *vm* **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra / Robert Spano**

ASO Media © 2 CD1005 (83' • DDD)



Captured with thrilling fidelity by the microphones, Spano's reading of the 1936

cantata *Dona nobis pacem* impresses by dint of its flawless discipline, unflappable poise and clear-headed thrust, in which respects it most closely resembles – you've guessed it! – Robert Shaw's Telarc recording (11/98) with these same Atlanta forces. Enjoyable as it is, though, I do miss something of the the lofty sweep, characterful temperament and clinching authority of Boult's 1973 traversal (EMI, 5/74) and (especially) Richard Hickox's remarkably eloquent and blazingly intense LSO version from 20 years later (EMI British Composers, 12/93). Nor, it must be said, are Spano's vocal soloists the equal of Hickox's Yvonne Kenny and Bryn Terfel (the latter memorably sensitive and always illuminating in his delivery of Whitman's illimitably compassionate 'Reconciliation').

Competition is, of course, tougher still in the confrontational F minor Symphony, and here too I find myself craving altogether greater emotional charge than Spano and company can muster. Granted, the orchestral playing boasts superlative coordination and beguiling sheen but tension levels are set a few notches too low for comfort, while the linked *Scherzo* and finale in particular are lacking in the necessary coiled energy and cumulative frenzy. The slow movement fares best, its central climax built and resolved with unerring skill, but interpretatively speaking Spano's clean-cut Fourth doesn't really compete alongside a whole host of rivals, among them VW himself and Barbirolli (electrifying, both, with the BBC SO from 1937 and 1950 respectively), Mitropoulos (with the NYPO from 1953 and 1956), Berglund (1/14), Handley (11/92), Haitink




René Jacobs

conducts **Emilio de Cavalieri**
Rappresentatione
di Anima & di Corpo





Marie-Claude Chappuis
Johannes Weisser | Gyula Orendt
Mark Milhofer | Marcos Fink
Staatsopernchor Berlin
Concerto Vocale
Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin
René Jacobs

Composed at a time when neither oratorio nor opera existed, this *Rappresentatione* premiered in February 1600 is a magisterial musical drama. In its dialogue between Soul and Body – an emblematic theme of the Counter-Reformation – it employs singers, chorus, and an extensive orchestra whose varied timbres both accompany and characterise the soloists. At the dawn of the Baroque revolution, song, stage action, dance, and instrumental music combine in perfect harmony.

'Jacobs draws uniformly fine singing from his soloists and chorus, and beautiful playing from his instrumentalists. *Rappresentatione* is a worthwhile discovery' **Financial Times** (concert review)



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(5/98) and Oundjian (5/12). The symphony is followed (after rather too short a gap) by an uncommonly beautiful account of *The Lark Ascending*, which finds the ASO's concertmaster, David Coucheron, on enviably secure and radiant form, and Spano drawing some ravishingly tender and hushed sounds from his silky band. Best try before you buy. **Andrew Achenbach**

Vivaldi

Vivaldi Concertos^a - RV93; 'Summer', Op 8 No 2, RV315; Op 3 No 6, RV356; RV425; RV443 - Largo. Trio Sonata, RV82^b **Anonymous** La biondina in gondoleta^c

Avi Avital mand^c **Juan Diego Flórez** ten^b **Patrick Sepec** vc^b **Ophira Zakai** lute^b **Mahan Esfahani** hpd^a
Venice Baroque Orchestra
 DG Ⓢ 479 4017GH (51' • DDD)



If Avi Avital's intention is to do for the mandolin what

Andrés Segovia did for the classical guitar, he's already well on the way. Appropriate then that this, his third and possibly best release to date, should feature three Vivaldi concertos popular with guitarists. This homage to Venice's favourite musical son in many ways picks up where Avital's terrific debut recording of JS Bach concertos left off. This time, the mandolin's on home turf, not only returning to its Italian roots but in one case rejoicing in a concerto actually written for it.

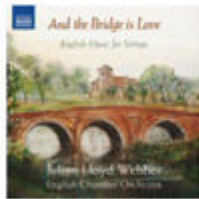
Avital and the superb Venice Baroque Orchestra make the C major Mandolin Concerto, RV425, their own, the *pizzicato* strings and organ continuo the rich clay into which Avital carves his crisp, fluid lines. But even better is the utterly thrilling account of 'Summer' from *The Four Seasons*. Here, as throughout, Avital's astonishingly smooth *legato* playing is broken up by rapid *détaché* passages and propulsive strums that sweep through the music like electrical storms, perfectly complementing the orchestra's crisp, light string-playing and spooky *sul ponticello* effects in the slow movement.

As a respite from the concertos' high drama, there's an exquisite account of the C major Trio Sonata, originally for violin and lute with continuo. Avital again takes the violin's part, while harpsichord duties fall to the brilliant Mahan Esfahani, recently signed to DG. The gentle final track, where Avital and friends accompany tenor Juan Diego Flórez in the charming gondolier's song 'La biondina in gondoleta', feels just right. **William Yeoman**

'And the Bridge is Love'

6

Delius Two Aquarelles (arr Fenby) **Elgar** Chanson de nuit, Op 15 No 1. Chanson de matin, Op 15 No 2 (both arr WH Reed). Introduction and Allegro, Op 47. Serenade, Op 20. Sospiri, Op 70 **Goodall** And the Bridge is Love^a **Ireland** A Downland Suite - No 3, Minuet **W Lloyd Webber** The Moon **Vaughan Williams** The Charterhouse Suite - No 1, Prelude **Walton** Henry V - Passacaglia: Death of Falstaff; Touch her soft lips and part
English Chamber Orchestra / Julian Lloyd Webber ^avc
 Naxos Ⓢ 8 573250 (70' • DDD)



A neck injury may have forced Julian Lloyd Webber to retire from the concert

platform as a soloist but this conspicuously accomplished programme demonstrates he also possesses a considerable talent for wielding the conductor's baton. Howard Goodall's poignantly elegiac *And the Bridge is Love* for solo cello, strings and harp (composed for the 2008 Chipping Campden Festival) gets top billing on the cover; needless to report, Lloyd Webber plays with total commitment in what was his final recording as a soloist – and the ECO is with him every step of the way. There are three more world premiere recordings: Elgar's *Chanson de nuit* and *Chanson de matin* are heard in WH ('Billy') Reed's wonderfully idiomatic transcriptions (and most disarmingly Lloyd Webber shapes them, too); and we also get a sweetly lyrical miniature, *The Moon*, by William Lloyd Webber (1914-82).

However, what really make this anthology worth investigating are the strikingly articulate, scrupulously prepared and consistently involving readings of the remaining British masterworks for string orchestra, for which Lloyd Webber displays a striking affinity. In his imaginative hands Elgar's towering Introduction and Allegro has a big-hearted candour, contrapuntal clarity and bracing vigour that make you sit up and listen. Nor could anyone miss the very real sense of heartache and shuddering passion that inform *Sospiri* (where the harmonium contribution is most tastefully integrated within the luminously textured whole). The Serenade, too, comes off very well, Lloyd Webber procuring playing of unruffled poise, generous depth of feeling and alluring tonal lustre from the ECO. Elsewhere, Delius's *Two Aquarelles* are essayed with exceptional perception (I was put in mind

of Norman Del Mar's incomparably poetic way with this music), while both Walton's *Henry V* diptych and the delectable Minuet from Ireland's *A Downland Suite* receive raptly communicative and ideally pliable treatment.

Admirably produced by Andrew Keener, and with sound emanating from Watford Town Hall that is rich and glowingly realistic to match (take a bow, Mike Clements), this enormously enjoyable Naxos anthology deserves every success, and I for one look forward to future releases under Julian Lloyd Webber's personable lead. **Andrew Achenbach**

'Comédie et Tragédie'

Lully Le bourgeois gentilhomme - Suite **Marais** Alcione - Suite **Rebel** Les éléments **Tempesta di Mare** / **Gwyn Roberts, Richard Stone**
 Chandos Chaconne Ⓢ CHAN0805 (67' • DDD)



The enterprising Philadelphia Baroque Orchestra known as Tempesta di Mare,

founded in 2002, was the brainchild of the American lutenist Richard Stone and his wife, the flautist Gwyn Roberts, and the repertoire they have recorded on Chandos heretofore reflects their strengths: Fasch, Mancini and Weiss as well as Bach, Handel and Scarlatti.

Their new release, a disc of French theatre music by Lully, Rebel and Marais, marks the first of a projected series. The choice of music on this CD already enjoys reasonable currency, especially Jordi Savall's version of Lully's 'Cérémonie des Turcs' from *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) for the film *Tous le matins du monde* (1994). Rebel's 'Le chaos' that opens *Les éléments* (1737-38) once heard is never forgotten and much the same can be said of the dramatic 'Tempête' in Marais's opera *Alcione* (1706). Subsequent releases will undoubtedly include less well-known gems.

Tempesta di Mare opt for a softer-edged soundscape than many other specialist Baroque ensembles. In particular, a distinct sense of distance characterises their Lully tracks. The directors have taken full advantage of Lully's sparsely preserved instrumentation and used solo guitars, recorders and bassoon in the 'Canaries' and solo bassoon in the 'Tambourins' to good effect, though one might question some of the percussion effects. They have also respected Lully's well-known aversion to *inégalité*, though some may feel the music sounds slightly foursquare as a result. The group seem genuinely at home in the

18th-century music, and the recorded sound in the Rebel and Marais is more immediate. The tempos are well chosen – dignified in the overtures and marches, lilting and swaggering in the airs and dances – and the command of dynamics and ornamentation are superb throughout.

Julie Anne Sadie

'Concerti veneziani'

Albinoni Oboe Concerto, Op 7 No 3 **Bigaglia** Oboe Concerto in B flat **A Marcello** Oboe Concerto, SF-D935 **Platti** Oboe Concerto in G minor **Sammartini** Oboe Concerto in D **Vivaldi** Oboe Concertos, Op 8 No 12 RV449/178; Op 11 No 6 RV460

Alfredo Bernardini ob **Zefiro** Arcana Ⓢ A380 (72' • DDD)



Zefiro present oboe concertos by different composers all associated to varying degrees with Venice. The quality of Zefiro's musicianship and the shrewd sequence of contrasting keys mean that there are no hints of monotony. The band of single players on each instrument never feels underpowered, but rather there is a

delightful flexibility and conversational ease in these masterful performances. Alfredo Bernardini plays an oboe dating from 1730 by the Milanese craftsman Giovanni Maria Anciuti, made from ebony rather than the more conventional boxwood.

We usually hear violinists playing the solo part in the 12th concerto from Vivaldi's Op 8 collection (1725), which also contains *The Four Seasons*. Bernardini presents a compelling case for the optional oboe alternative in a sweetly buoyant performance. Giovanni Benedetto Platti's G minor Concerto has a lyrically beguiling central *Largo* and climaxes with a zesty *Presto*. Albinoni's Concerto in B flat, Op 7 No 3 (1715) is by turns convivial and seductive, and it is gratifying to hear Marcello's original version of the D minor Oboe Concerto that was later transcribed by Bach for solo harpsichord during his years in Weimar; anyone unsure whether or not to buy this should listen to Zefiro's sublime playing of Marcello's *Adagio*. The intricately shaded string band, led by first violinist Nicholas Robinson, contributes significantly to the charm and atmosphere of these refined performances, as do Luca Guglielmi's tasteful keyboard continuo realisations.

David Vickers

'Hallowed Ground'

Copland *Lincoln Portrait* ^a**D Lang** *Mountain* **Muhly** *Pleasure Ground*^b

^a**Maya Angelou** *spkr* ^b**Nathan Wyatt** *bar*

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra / **Louis Langrée** *Fanfare Cincinnati* Ⓢ FC003 (46' • DDD)



These are all live recordings, followed by applause, forming the first CD by the

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under Louis Langrée. Past speakers in *Lincoln Portrait* have been wide-ranging: Copland himself; presidents Clinton and Obama and film and media celebrities. Maya Angelou recorded it only the year before she died last May and her reading is perhaps understandably rather subdued.

David Lang has made an impact with his post-minimalist style. *Mountain* is a tribute to Copland and arose from a vista in Vermont. A mountain is an eloquent symbol for Copland, especially his tougher works. Lang starts with a repeated but varied short outburst, about every five seconds, first heard on its own. Then, after a pause, sustained sounds begin to appear in between the attacks and they become

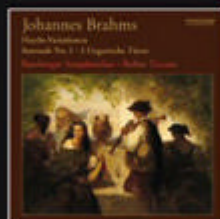
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increasingly lyrical. That's what this finely engineered piece is about and it works perfectly.

Nico Muhly's *Pleasure Ground* uses a text taken from the writings of Frederick Law Olmsted, the 19th-century landscape architect responsible for New York's Central Park and many more. The first song muses on the connection between art and nature; the second deals with wounded soldiers convalescing; and finally Olmsted urges the planting of trees. This makes absolute environmental sense but Muhly's settings are bland and Wyatt's baritone lacks contrast. **Peter Dickinson**

'Nordic Concertos'

Crusell Introduction and Variations on a Swedish Air, Op 12^a **Hillborg** Clarinet Concerto, 'Peacock Tales'^b **Holmboe** Clarinet Concerto No 3, Op 21^c **Rehnqvist** Clarinet Concerto, 'On a Distant Shore'^d

^aÖstgöta Symphony Wind Ensemble / Arie van Beek; ^bSwedish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Esa-Pekka Salonen; ^cAalborg Symphony Orchestra / Owain Arwel Hughes; ^dSwedish Chamber Orchestra / Petter Sundkvist
BIS (F) BIS2123 (76' • DDD/DSD)
From BIS-CD818 (1/98); Ondine ODE1006-2 (11/03); BIS-CD1176 (4/05); BIS-CD1396



Fröst is the star of the show here. Not that the four accompanying

orchestras and conductors are anything but exemplary accompanists; in each work, soloist, orchestra and conductor prove models of co-operation in bringing the visions of four very disparate composers to life.

I had the pleasure of reviewing the recording of *Peacock Tales* (1998 – designed as a multimedia composition but working beautifully as absolute music) on its first appearance on an all-Hillborg disc from Ondine. I was immediately struck by its kaleidoscopic range of moods and expression, and time has not dulled its sense of exuberant excitement. Holmboe's Concerto No 3 is a masterpiece of neo-classicism and one of the Dane's finest utterances. Fröst shows a more restrained side to his character in his superlative account, with a beguiling fluidity of line outclassing his fine Dacapo rival, Niels Thomsen.

A different kind of restraint is needed in Karin Rehnqvist's atmospheric suite *On a Distant Shore* (2002), again previously issued on a fascinating all-Rehnqvist album. Here, filigree delicacy is essential, yet with a spine of steel. As on BIS's 'Hekas!' disc

(1/98), these modern works have Crusell's delightful *Introduction and Variations on a Swedish Air* (Op 12, not Op 124 as the disc cover lists it) as makeweight. Fröst shows how adept he is at the older style of writing in a performance as fluent and virtuoso as King's or Thompson's. Crusellians, though, may prefer Rosengren, with the ever-cultured Okko Kamu for Musica Sveciae on – for once – an all-Crusell disc.

Guy Rickards

Crusell – selected comparisons:

King, LSO, Francis (11/81⁸, 4/97) (HYPE) CDD22017

Thompson, ECO, Tortelier (9/87) (ASV) CDDCA585

Rosengren, Swedish RSO, Kamu (MUSV) MSCD527

Holmboe – comparative version:

Thomsen, Danish Rad Concert Orch

(4/97) (DACA) 8 224038

'Silk Road'

Borodin In the Steppes of Central Asia **Busoni** Turandot Suite, Op 41 **Dan** The Silk Road

Argovia Philharmonic Orchestra /

Douglas Bostock

Coviello (F) COV91413 (65' • DDD/DSD)



The booklet essay outlines a programme to each work which might not be readily appreciable from the performances. The meeting of Russian and Mongolian cultures in Borodin's portrait is transparent but dimensionally flat where conductors as diverse as Ansermet and Gergiev make an empty heat-haze from the opening, unending violin line, and the pages spring to life.

Likewise, Douglas Bostock and the (Swiss) Argovia Philharmonic make an exciting march from the opening of Busoni's quasi-symphonic reworking of scenes and interludes from his *Turandot* opera (from 1917, almost a decade before Puccini's abortive version), but in Michael Gielen's recording of the suite (Vox – nla), I hear the approach to the scaffold, the terror of the prisoners and the implacability of the Empress's guards. It's partly a matter of tempo, more generally of imaginative response. Gielen's Cincinatti band and the La Scala orchestra under Muti could hardly present a starker tonal contrast – the first relishing the punch and glitter of Busoni's scoring, the Italians indulging its lushness – but both bring more swaggering, virtuoso colour to the suite's character-portraits of Turandot, Altoum and Truffaldino.

Whether or not the performance of Ikuma Dan's four-movement symphonic suite from 1955 is similarly accurate but literal may be beside the point. *The Silk*

Road has no overt programme but its twinkly pentatonicism would not sound out of place in a (Western) film of an Eastern setting or story. The march has something of Yul Brynner's cold but compassionate stare and the Pastorale would cover the plight of the cowering villagers. For tunes, though, there's nothing here to touch the Sevens, be they Magnificent or Samurai.

Peter Quantrill

Busoni – selected comparison:

Scala PO, Muti (4/94⁸) (EMI) 456324-2

'Spirit of the American Range'

Antheil A Jazz Symphony **Copland** Symphony

No 3 **Piston** The Incredible Flutist – Suite

Oregon Symphony Orchestra / Carlos Kalmar

Pentatone (F) PTC5186 481 (65' • DDD/DSD)



Piston's Suite from his ballet *The Incredible Flutist* has been his best-known work but

it owes more to 19th-century ballet traditions than to the Piston we admire in his symphonies and quartets. When the original dancers first heard the music for the Circus March they cheered: it stayed in the score (8'30") and is done with real gusto here as an introduction to the 'flutist'. Antheil's *A Jazz Symphony* – neither jazz nor symphony – is pleasantly crazy in the 1920s idiom and comes off well.

When I considered all available recordings of Copland's epic Third (8/10) I staked a claim for it to be the greatest American symphony. The premiere of Copland's Third in 1946 showed that it emerged from the immediate post-war context but it also transcends it and symbolises the American century. My conclusion was that Bernstein's second recording was top choice, with Copland's own as an essential document, and Oue and the Minnesota as digital choice. Kalmar and the Oregon Symphony are impressive and create a challenge to the established choices. Kalmar is a minute shorter than Bernstein in both the opening movement and the fanfare finale. Overall his interpretation is similar to Bernstein's, and the orchestra's expert handling of the work suggests that they should record more. Engineering is excellent but individual tracks for the Piston would have been a help. **Peter Dickinson**

Copland – selected comparisons:

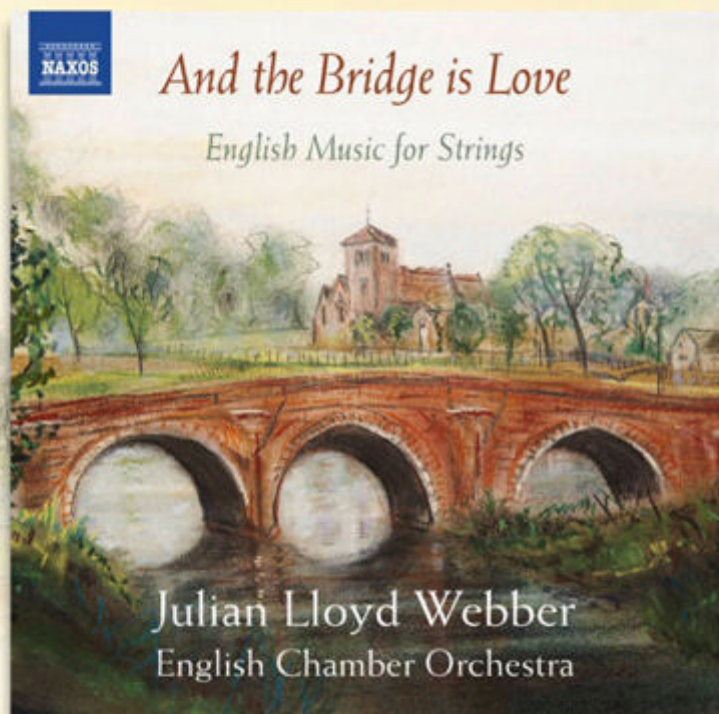
NYPO, Bernstein, r1985 (11/86⁸) (DG) 474 940-2GB6

Minnesota Orch, Oue (A/00) (REFE) RRCD93

LSO, Copland (EVER) EVERCD002



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Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*

Andrew Farach-Colton joins conductor **David Zinman** to examine the ballet score's revisions

Look here at the opening of "The Augurs of Spring". David Zinman points to a page in his well-worn full score of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. 'Here in the 1967 edition, it's all downbows in the strings. Every note. Now, look here at this version.' He picks up a much newer, spiral-bound score, flipping through to find the corresponding page. 'See? Originally there were no downbow markings at all. The effect is quite different.'

'Originally,' in this case, refers to the 1913 manuscript of Stravinsky's iconic ballet. Several years back, in preparation for performances marking the anniversary of its Paris premiere, Zinman visited the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel to study the manuscript. 'It's an amazing document,' he explains. 'Most of it was written in his wife Catherine's hand, but there are things in Stravinsky's hand as well. It was really lovely to see. And I thought, wouldn't it be great if we could perform this version because it had actually never been performed before.' Never, apparently, because significant changes were made even before the premiere. And the first orchestral score wasn't published until 1921, incorporating further revisions.

Zinman had a printed score and parts made from the manuscript, and conducted the original 1913 version of *The Rite of Spring* with the Tonhalle Orchestra in Zurich, alongside the more familiar 1967 revision, and a lecture-demonstration – all of which was recorded live and recently released by RCA.

Coincidentally, some of the key changes to the manuscript had been suggested to Stravinsky by Pierre Monteux, who led *The Rite*'s riotous premiere. And Monteux was Zinman's teacher. 'It's kind of amazing that Stravinsky, who couldn't be at any of the rehearsals until the final dress rehearsal, just accepted *all* of Monteux's suggestions. He just did it without even hearing it. He trusted Monteux that much.' Zinman flips a few pages forward in the original version. 'This was cut,' he says, showing me some detailed violin writing in the middle of the 'Augurs of Spring' section. 'Look at this wonderful *divisi* writing. It's so much richer, and I'm rather sorry it was cut because it sounds really lovely. But Monteux thought it was too heavy.'

I suggest that there's a little bit of *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* in this passage. 'Oh, yes,' Zinman nods. 'There's definitely a glow here that reminds me of *Petrushka*. But at this point



David Zinman was Principal Conductor of the Tonhalle Orchestra from 1995-2014

Stravinsky no longer wanted to be connected with that world. It was in part a denial of his roots as a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov. And, of course, his style kept evolving, so every time he looked back at the score, he saw it differently. And with every revision he tried to get further and further away from that world. He was always making it drier.'

I ask Zinman if he'd studied *The Rite of Spring* with Monteux. 'Absolutely. In fact, I had to prepare the LSO when Monteux conducted the 50th anniversary performance in London. He always used the 1922 edition simply because that was the only version he'd ever learned. Sadly, his score with all of his markings has disappeared, along with the parts. Anyway, that's what I had to teach to the LSO – the 1922 version and all his markings – as the orchestra was already used to the later revisions.'



The historical view

Giacomo Puccini

An undated letter to his publisher Ricordi from Paris

'The choreography is ridiculous, the music is sheer cacophony. There is some originality, however, and a certain amount of talent. But taken altogether, it might be the creation of a madman.'

Aaron Copland

The New Music, 1968

'Heading the list of Stravinsky's original gifts was his rhythmic virtuosity...It was Stravinsky who first revitalised our rhythmic sense. He gave European music what amounted to a rhythmic hypodermic. It has never been the same since.'

John Adams

Hallelujah Junction: 2008

'Works like *Le Sacre du Printemps*, *Pierrot Lunaire*, and Ives's Fourth Symphony emerged not because the composers were reacting against Wagner and his epigones but rather because the composers *needed* to make them.'

Pierre Monteux's overarching advice to Zinman was 'Don't rush'. 'He said the tempi had to be danceable. He thought that most conductors played the work too fast because they thought it would sound better that way, but that dancers needed more time.' He thumbs ahead in the score to the final section, the 'Sacrificial Dance'. 'This section, the ending, he always did a little bit on the slow side.' Zinman sings it for me as he conducts with small motions. 'Monteux warned me, "Not too fast there".' I point out that both of Zinman's recordings of the 'Sacrificial Dance' on the new recording – the 1913 and 1967 versions – are, in fact, slower than in Monteux's account with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Zinman shrugs. 'Maybe I exaggerate. I don't know. I didn't listen to his recordings before I conducted these performances, but his words are stuck in my mind. And I do remember that in his 1929 recording, the brass rush like crazy.' He sings it for me, chuckling. 'It's like they're on a horse, just barely hanging on. And Monteux was a very steady conductor.'

I tell him I quite like the deliberate tempo, as it allows the 'Sacrificial Dance' to build gradually rather than to come

'It's supposed to get your blood pressure going. Unpredictability is a crucial part of what makes it powerful' – David Zinman

across as one big explosion. 'Exactly.' Zinman quickly reaches for the 1913 score. 'Look here at rehearsal number 186. The strings are marked *piano* and *pizzicato*! And then – slowly – it builds. But in the 1967 edition, it's all *forte* and the strings play *arco* [with the bow]. It's just a different conception of the dance. Stravinsky changed it, I think, partly because he didn't find it clear enough. Also, the louder dynamic and using the bow gives the player more to hang on to. Stravinsky learned all this by conducting the work himself many times over the years.'

We discuss how orchestras have mastered what used to be a terrifyingly difficult score, as attested by both Monteux's and Stravinsky's 1929 recordings. Today, even student orchestras are able to play *The Rite of Spring* with remarkable assurance. Nevertheless, Zinman says he approaches every performance with some fear. 'The terror comes from the music's unpredictability. You're always a little bit off balance. But, then again, you never want to feel too comfortable with this music. It's supposed to get your blood pressure going. This unpredictability is a crucial part of what makes it such a powerful work.'

I notice a difference in the appearance of Zinman's two scores. His battered paperbound score of the familiar 1967 version has a few black pencil annotations, though not many, while the 1913 original is a neat yet complex web of black, blue and red markings. 'I had to relearn *The Rite* in this version. It was hard for the orchestra, too, because it's not what they are used to. There are so many small differences. Some things that are obviously mistakes that Stravinsky later corrected. What's valuable about this score is that it allows us to hear this work as it was first conceived, and from here we can discern what he changed and what he didn't change. It's a unique document, and we simply played it as it is, warts and all.'

▶ To read Gramophone's review of Zinman's double Rite of Spring turn to page 60

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Chamber



Guy Rickards on a new recording of Suk's complete quartet works:

'The Second Quartet, with its darker colouring, is one of Suk's finest utterances in any medium' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



Adrian Edwards rounds-up a crop of recent brass and wind issues:

'Tuba player Ruben Dura de Lama's nimble dexterity and ability to sing a line are things of wonder' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**

JL Adams

The Wind in High Places^a. *Canticles of the Sky*^b. *Dream of the Canyon Wren*^a

^aJACK Quartet; ^bNorthwestern University Cello Ensemble / Hans Jørgen Jensen
Cold Blue © CB0041 (44' • DDD)



John Luther Adams's status as one of new music's most original musical voices was

recognised last year when he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the orchestral work *Become Ocean* (Cantaloupe, 11/14). Man's dialectical relationship with nature continues to haunt and fascinate Adams but the emphasis shifts from sea to sky on this disc, which focuses on his music for strings.

The origins of the title-track lie in a set of solo violin pieces composed by Adams in 2007 in memory of his close friend, the Alaskan composer and environmentalist Gordon Wright. These ideas were reworked into *The Wind in High Places*, Adams's first real stab at the string quartet medium. The work draws additional inspiration from the ethereal, wind-generated tones of the Aeolian harp, with each string retuned to create a large, 16-string harp.

The idea is not new, of course (think of Benjamin Franklin's Quartet for three violins and cello, which also only uses open tunings); however, Adams makes extensive use of natural harmonics here, especially during the work's middle movement, 'Maclaren Summit', where he gradually builds up a complex four-part canon. The effect is – quite literally – breathtaking, aided in no small measure by the JACK Quartet's precise performance. By contrast, the first and last movements present a more reserved panoramic 'sweep', suggesting the wide-open spaces of the Alaskan landscape.

The other work played on this recording by the JACK Quartet, *The Dream of the Canyon Wren*, is perhaps more programmatic in tone. And in the opening section of *Canticles of the Sky*, performed

here by the 45 cellists of the Northwestern University Cello Ensemble, one is reminded by the music not so much of floating in the air but rather of being wrapped in a warm blanket of pure sound.

Pwyll ap Siôn

JS Bach

'The Art of Bach'

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, 'Actus tragicus', BWV106: Sonatina (arr Kurtág). Concerto for Two Keyboards, BWV1061. St Matthew Passion, BWV244 – Suite (arr Anderson/Roe). Die Kunst der Fuge, BWV1080 – Contrapuncts IX, XIIIa & XIIIb. Five Canons on the Goldberg Ground, BWV1087. Cantata No 127 – Die Seele ruht in Jesu Händen (arr Anderson/Roe)^a. Sheep may safely graze (arr Howe). Brandenburg Concerto No 3, BWV1048 (arr Reger)

Greg Anderson, Elizabeth Joy Roe *pfs* with

^aAugustin Hadelich *vn*

Steinway & Sons © STNS30033 (74' • DDD)



For their third Steinway & Sons release, the Anderson & Roe Piano Duo

dedicate their uncanny ensemble prowess and canny programme-building to JS Bach. The eloquent reserve of Kurtág's so-called E flat Sonatina leads into the C major Concerto for two keyboards (*sans* orchestra), which stands out for the duo's gorgeously calibrated *legato* phrasing in the slow movement, plus relaxed propulsion and playful conversational ease in the fugal finale. While the idea of five *St Matthew Passion* numbers arranged into a two-piano suite is tantamount to box-office poison, it actually works. What is more, the duo's restraint and taste reveal how the music's expressive poignancy stands up without sung texts. Perhaps more varied phrasings would have brought out more of the *Art of Fugue* Contrapunctus IX's vivacity but the pianists' double-dotting in Bach's two keyboard arrangement of the three-voice mirror fugue allows the music to dance off the page.

Subtle dissonant inflections and feathery *staccato* articulation distinguish a selection of Canons based on the *Goldberg Variations*' ground. A specially arranged aria from Cantata No 127 (with the excellent violin soloist Augustin Hadelich as special guest) gently wanders into Romantic pianism's registral extremes. The duo link the outer movements of the Bach/Reger Third *Brandenburg* Concerto (what a tempo for the final *Allegro!*) with a cadenza that liberally quotes from the *Chromatic Fantasy*'s arpeggiated chord sequence. And why not? After all, Bach borrowed – indeed, stole – from himself all the time. Certainly he would have embraced Anderson & Roe's ingenuity and musicianship. **Jed Distler**

Bartók • Ligeti

'Complete Music for Two Pianos'

Bartók Suite No 2, Op 4 Sz34. The Miraculous Mandarin, Op 19 Sz73 – Suite. Mikrokosmos – excs. Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, Sz110^a **Ligeti** Three Pieces

Matteo Fossi, Marco Gaggini *pfs*

^aFederico Poli, ^aGianni Giangrosso *perc*
Brilliant © 2 94737 (116' • DDD)



The oom-pah figuration that launches Bartók's Suite, Op 4 – which he arranged for two pianos in 1941 from his original 1907 orchestral version – gets briefly overlaid with a digital squeak here, and throughout this survey of Bartók and his music for two pianos, the booming magnificence of these sonic walks into the unknown are never quite captured as faithfully as you'd like. Loud dynamics mean smudgy textures and the recorded sound feels needlessly impersonal and functional.

Which is a pity, because the Italian pianists Matteo Fossi and Marco Gaggini (best known for their two-piano recording of the Brahms symphonies) play like a

dream. The opening of *The Miraculous Mandarin* sounds paradoxically more orchestral than the orchestral version – if by ‘orchestral’ you mean clearly delineated layers of sound that congeal into a complex whole. True enough, with the introductions made and Bartók defaulting towards utilitarian *tremolos* to carry the action, colouristic and dramatic impetus is lost as nuts-and-bolts harmonic engineering begins to overwhelm the actual music. But the accumulated impact of that introduction is heady stuff indeed. Criss-crossing lines in freefalling chromaticism disorientate your senses like those looming spirals typical of a Hitchcock staircase. The chase sequence works especially well too, the clarity of pianos giving Bartók’s fugue an intensely etched presence. But moving to the second disc, away from transcribed orchestral music towards notes specifically designed for their instrument, comes as a relief.

Not that everything in the garden is rosy. The Sonata for two pianos and percussion gets a cautious if undeniably meticulous performance. The spacious second movement has moments of spooked beauty as percussionists Federico Poli and Gianni Giangrasso craft true sound-art out of Bartók’s fastidious instructions about precisely where to place sticks and beaters on snare drums and cymbals. But the dynamic perspective of the first movement is compromised by the pinched recording, and the finale is dogged by its sluggish tempo and glaringly out-of-tune xylophone. By the time you reach the seven short pieces from *Mikrokosmos* you realise that this in fact was the only dedicated music Bartók wrote for two pianos, with the last of them, ‘Ostinato’, echoing the finale of *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*; the filler, Ligeti’s Three Pieces, feels very much at home in the world of Bartók as clouds of micropolyphony float between these two generations of Hungarian masters.

Philip Clark

Beethoven

Complete Works for Cello and Piano

Matt Haimovitz *vc* Christopher O’Riley *fp*

Pentatone (P) PTC5186 475 (140’ • DDD/DSD)



Cellist Matt Haimovitz prefaces his period-instrument Beethoven cycle with an absorbing essay, writing that ‘the consideration is no longer the modern-day “how can the cello cut through the multi-

voiced powerhouse of a concert grand piano”, but “how can it make room for the nuances of the 19th-century fortepiano?” Good engineering also helps, and Pentatone’s vividly resonant production captures the music’s wide dynamic range with comparable clarity and heft to the two Bylsma editions, and surpasses the slightly dry and close-up Isserlis/Levin cycle.

More significantly, Haimovitz and pianist Christopher O’Riley play the living daylights out of these works. They lap up Beethoven’s combative style like hungry lions anticipating raw steak, relishing the composer’s frequent *subito* dynamics, unpredictable placement of accents and over-the-bar-line phrase groupings. Rarely has Op 5 No 1’s first-movement introduction come alive with such rhythmic character, while the rollicking yet relaxed repartee of Op 5 No 2’s Rondo underlines the music’s kinship to the Fourth Piano Concerto’s finale. Similar attention to detail adds intensity and colour to the off-beat accents in Op 69’s *Scherzo*, and the *Allegro vivace*’s playful demeanor (complete with scrupulously observed *staccatos*) makes for a brash contrast to the eloquence and nobility one normally encounters. If the duo pile into Op 102 No 1’s *Allegro vivace* too aggressively for certain pitches to register, the joyous, uplifting mood conveyed by their briskly paced Op 102 No 2 final fugue’s transparency and sophisticated phraseology is worth this release’s total price.

Terrific performances of the variation sets prove more than merely filler. If you want a HIP counterpart to the Maisky/Argerich cycle, look no further.

Jed Distler

Selected comparisons:

Maisky, Argerich (2/92⁸, 12/93⁸, 2/95)

(DG) 439 934-2GH2

Bylsma, Bilson (4/92) (NONE)

7559 79152-2, 7559 79236-2

Isserlis, Levin (2/14) (HYPE) CDA67981/2

Beethoven

‘Complete Works for Piano Trio, Vol 1’

Piano Trios – No 1, Op 1 No 1;

No 7, ‘Archduke’, Op 97

Swiss Piano Trio

Audite (A) AUDITE97 692 (74’ • DDD)

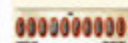


Instruments are carefully balanced, sound is good. But this recording, originally in SACD format, would audibly have been a lot finer if it hadn’t been downscaled to CD. Yet an elevated standard of

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Beethoven’s Archduke Trio

Three recordings that came before the Swiss Piano Trio’s – and how Gramophone rated them



JANUARY 1966

Beethoven Piano Trio No 7,

‘Archduke’, Op 97



Beaux Arts Trio

Philips (P) AL3527-30 (four 12in • 32s 3d)

In every work the *pianissimo* passages are a joy, and there is always delicate precision to balance the grand manner. This particular combination is especially noticeable in the first movement of the *Archduke*, which sounds both bigger and more contrasted in feeling than the agreeably casual Russian performance by Richter, Kogan and Rostropovich. You may well prefer the delightfully relaxed playing of the Russians, but I suspect that Beethoven himself would have opted for tension. Roger Fiske



NOVEMBER 2003

Beethoven Piano Trio No 7,

‘Archduke’, Op 97

Florestan Trio

Hyperion (H) CDA67369 (61’ • DDD)

At the start of the *Archduke* Trio

I wondered if the music was perhaps being ‘worried’ too much, with every cross accent and dynamic change pointed up. It soon becomes clear, however, that this approach is part of a wider scheme. Instead of taking Beethoven’s magnificent, expansive opening theme as a cue to sustain a mood of calm nobility, the Florestan’s delight in showing us all the twists and turns, the tribulations and frustrations to which the composer’s initial vision is subject. When the theme returns in its grandest statement at the end of the movement, there’s a powerful feeling of arrival and fulfilment. Duncan Druce



MAY 2012

Beethoven Piano Trio No 7,

‘Archduke’, Op 97

Peter Cropper *vn* Moray Welsh *vc*

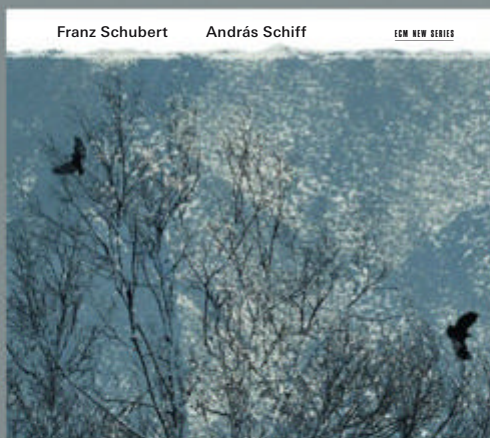
Martin Roscoe *pf*

Sonimage (S) SON11102 (77’ • DDD)

Expressive penetration is deep, and gets deeper in the *Andante cantabile*. Beethoven’s piano-writing in these four variations and coda anticipates the tranquillity within changing rhythmic patterns heard in the *Arietta* of his last piano sonata Op 111, and Roscoe, his grasp of structure absolute, leads his partners in an interpretation of rarefied transcendence that also exalts the whole work.

Nalen Anthoni

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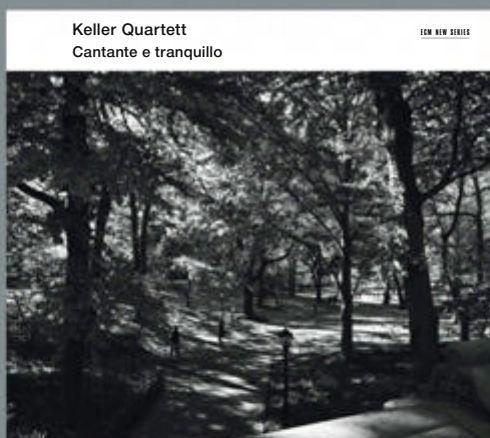
Wolfgang Rihm
Et Lux

For vocal ensemble and string quartet

Huelgas Ensemble
Minguet Quartett
Paul van Nevel

Premiere recording

CD 481 1585



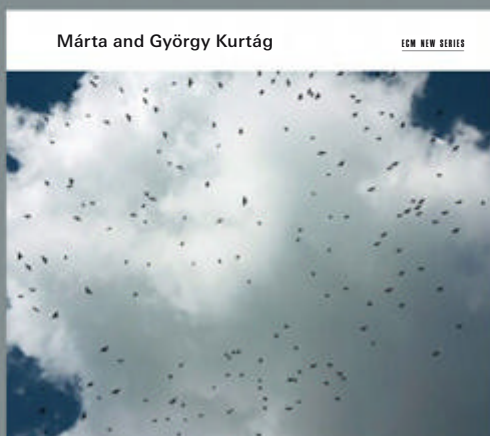
Keller Quartett
Cantante e tranquillo

ECM NEW SERIES

Keller Quartett
Cantante e tranquillo

Works for string quartet by
Ludwig van Beethoven, György Ligeti,
György Kurtág, Alfred Schnittke,
Alexander Knaifel and Johann Sebastian Bach
in a compilation created by
András Keller and Manfred Eicher

CD 481 1052



Márta and György Kurtág

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musicianship shines through, revealing the Swiss Piano Trio to be a redoubtable team. Perhaps the opening *Allegro* of Op 1 No 1 might have benefited from a slightly slower tempo but that's soon forgotten as a considerate emphasis on modulations and changes in character emerge unobtrusively. Similarly the second movement, a touch quick for *Adagio cantabile*, is nonetheless yieldingly flexible, the melancholy implicit in the switch from A flat major to tonic minor (2'56") keenly felt.

A wider range of expressive possibilities in interpretation arise in Op 97, the first movement teeming with intensity, an *Allegro* that pushes the envelope beyond the *moderato* also specified. But there is no sense of haste either here or in the *Scherzo*, fiercely forward-looking yet sensitive to the tenebrous tone of the B flat minor Trio, the long repeat properly observed. Invidious though it may be to single him out, pianist Martin Lucas Staub's leadership tells everywhere and has also to be credited for the charged emotional motivation of the slow movement; while the directions *Allegro moderato* followed by *Presto* in the finale are judged, and contrasted, to a nicety. For a more contemplative *Archduke* turn to Martin Roscoe and Co. But there is no gainsaying that this new performance is, on its chosen terms, equally formidable.

Nalen Anthoni

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Roscoe, Cropper, Welsh (5/12) (SONI) SON11102

Beethoven

'The Complete String Quartets, Vol 1'

String Quartets – No 4, Op 18 No 4; No 10, 'Harp', Op 74; No 13, Op 130 (with Grosse Fuge, Op 133)

Elias Quartet

Wigmore Hall Live © ② WHLIVE0073 (114' • DDD)

Recorded live, February 20, 2014



For all the boldness of both the dots and their execution, the Elias Quartet observe a certain Classical propriety which does not domesticate Beethoven's more feral inspirations but places his innovation in its proper context. Done with light hands, the Trio of Op 18 No 4 has an easy-going charm that serves to accentuate the otherwise dominant key of fierce tension. Nowhere do the Elias push the tempo to unreasonable extremes; rather tone-colour is an important and individual means of expression, including pure tone and *sul ponticello* in the spectral *Presto* of Op 130 and a keening *portamento* that would not

feel out of place in Bartók or Ligeti and yet here gropes for tonal certainty in the dark introduction to Op 74, before the sun comes out in the *Allegro* and its famous 'harp' countermelody, which has rarely deserved the nickname less: no pretty imitation here. Still the steep and rugged passage through the development doesn't thicken the body of their sound, which remains as distinctively slim and lithe as it was on their superb debut CD of Mendelssohn (10/09).

Those recordings were led from the front with unstinting courage by Sara Bitloch, and I hear that quality in the slow movements especially of Op 74 and Op 130: how unafraid she is of the melodic snowline, how securely her colleagues are roped behind her. And if the *Grosse Fuge* is patched from this single performance, it isn't obvious: either way it's an astonishing achievement, to make the piece feel for once like a plausible finale and not a monolith, by giving each gesture the rhetorical space of a Bruckner finale and not grinding every dissonance into your ear. Lengthy applause is retained and deserved.

Peter Quantrell

Brahms

String Sextets – No 1, Op 18; No 2, Op 36

Sine Nomine Quartet with

Nicolas Pache vs **François Guye** vc

Claves © 50 1410 (77' • DDD)



It makes an ideal coupling to have Brahms's String Sextets, both charming works, on a single disc. It is striking that Brahms liked writing works in pairs, sometimes early and late, like the two piano concertos and the cello sonatas. The two clarinet sonatas go together, as do the Clarinet Quintet and Clarinet Trio, all composed for Richard Mühlfeld. Even the Violin Concerto and the Double Concerto might be regarded as counterparts.

So to the string sextets. Written some nine years apart (1830 and 1839), they both represent Brahms at his warmest and most relaxed. That is just how the Sine Nomine Quartet and colleagues play them. If that means that one lacks ensemble of pinpoint precision, that is hardly a fault when warmth and relaxation rarely go with electrically precise ensemble. 'Sit back and enjoy yourself' seems to be the message.

The two works come in reverse order on the disc, which brings the advantage that the G major Second Sextet's wonderful *Allegro non troppo* opens with just the right mood, while the finale of the B flat First Sextet, marked *Poco allegretto e grazioso*, makes a joyous conclusion. It is striking that the performances regularly bring out the East European flavour, whether Hungarian or Czech in 'dumka' style, adding to the charm of the performances.

Edward Greenfield

Fauré • d'Indy • Saint-Saëns

Fauré Piano Trio, Op 120

d'Indy Piano Trio No 2 'en forme de suite', Op 98

Saint-Saëns Piano Trio No 1, Op 18

Horszowski Trio

Bridge © BRIDGE9441 (68' • DDD)



This highly accomplished group, based in New York, takes its name from the legendary pianist Mieczysław Horszowski (1892-1993). Pianist Rieko Aizawa was Horszowski's last pupil and the programme reflects this connection: Horszowski met both Saint-Saëns and Fauré, and in his youth moved in the same Parisian circles as d'Indy.

The playing in the Saint-Saëns makes the most of the clear textures and lively rhythms, and shows a keen appreciation of its witty interplay of themes. In the *Andante*, a most original movement, with a ballad-like theme accompanied only by a single sustained pitch, there's a most effective contrast between the remoteness of this melody and the rich, even sensuous sound of the harmonised episodes.

The trio achieve an impressive change of style for the Fauré, stressing blended sounds and a natural flow. Not that they perform this penultimate work of Fauré's old age in a bland manner: its more intense passages show passionate involvement. And the pacing of the central *Andante* seems to me just right – plenty of space for its lyricism to expand while keeping a strong sense of stately onward movement.

The d'Indy is another late work, written in 1929, two years before his death. Here he attempts a marriage between his own post-Franckian style and the idioms of the classical French suite. The most attractive movement, for me, is the Courante – more a leisurely amble than a run but inspiring some memorably expressive writing. This, too, receives an exemplary performance, and I long to hear more of the Horszowski Trio. **Duncan Druce**

Feldman

For Bunita Marcos

Lenio Liatsou pf

GOD Records ⑤ ② ● GOD27 (90' • DDD)

'The New York School'

E Brown Folio Cage Two Feldman

Why Patterns? Wolff In Between
Pieces (two versions)

Ensemble Avantgarde

Dabringhaus und Grimm ⑤ MDG613 1865-2
(69' • DDD)



Often I wonder whether the unstoppable rise of Morton Feldman would have been possible without the CD. Pieces that run in unbroken stretches, often over hours, don't find vinyl especially favourable to their cause, where the act of flipping the record over, and the mechanics of the needle re-engaging with the spinning grooves, imposes a narrative from outside the music. Vinyl is good for a pop song; good too for a Bruckner symphony with its neat divisions into movements. But Feldman lives or dies by how his music's uncoiling, elaborating structures sustain themselves over time.

This new release – on vinyl – of Feldman's 1985 solo piano *For Bunita Marcus* on the GOD Records label, performed by Lenio Liatsou, challenges us to think again about Feldman and format. With the boutique modern composition label Mode taking the trouble to issue alternate audio-only DVD versions (and in 24-bit stereo with an option to listen in surround sound) of Feldman's extended-duration pieces, a return to vinyl could feel like gas lighting is about to make a comeback; but clear advantages present themselves. That steady stopwatch timer on a CD player counts down in everyday minutes and seconds; and pausing a CD when the time comes to take a tea break is another distraction. Vinyl commands your undivided attention.

And Lenio Liatsou's performance is not to be missed. She cruises through Feldman's labyrinthine grid at a steady tempo, certainly compared to Hildegard KleeB's classic 1990 performance, administering the sustain pedal sparingly, responsibility resting on the touch of finger against keyboard to carry the music's inherent softness rather than relying on washes of ambient pedal. Vinyl brings an unfussy clarity; those occasional spiky fanfares Feldman embeds as structural

markers register as hardcore shocks. When the spell is broken by needing to turn the records over, yes, it's a nuisance; but there are considerable gains, too.

The main feature on 'The New York School' – music by Feldman, Cage, Earle Brown and Christian Wolff as performed by Ensemble Avantgarde – is Feldman's *Why Patterns?* (inexplicably referred to throughout all the accompanying material as 'Why Pattern?') which, like Liatsou's *For Bunita Marcus*, receives a measured and texturally stark performance. Stefan Stopora's glockenspiel has a shrill edge that complements well Steffen Schleiermacher's forthright piano against the obvious dulcet sweetness of Ralf Mielke's flute. For a time it felt like Feldman interpretation was a done deal – good to see ideas about his music are again on the move.

Phillip Clark

Feldman's *For Bunita Marcus* – selected comparison:
KleeB (HATN) HAT[NO]W[ART]174

Hvoslef

'Chamber Works, Vol 1'

Erkejubel^a. Duo due^b. Frammenti di Roma^c.

Scheherazade forteller videre^d. Canis lagopus^e

^aSteinar Hannevold ob ^cChristian Stene cl

^dPer Hannevold bn ^aGary Peterson, ^bBritt Pernille

Lindvik tpts ^aJohn-Arild Suther, ^bKjell Erik Husom

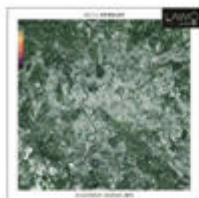
tbrns ^{bde}Ricardo Odriozola, ^cMāra Šmiukšė vns

^dIlze Klava va ^{be}John Ehde vc ^ePeter Palotai db

^dMarija Kadovič hp ^aEinar Røttingen synth

^{ae}Alexander Ulriksen perc

LAWO Classics ⑤ LWC1066 (62' • DDD)



Now in his mid-seventies, Ketil Hvoslef has long been a respected presence

on the contemporary music scene and a highly influential one in Norway: as was his father Harald Sæverud, with whom Hvoslef shares a liking for sharply etched textures and bracing harmonic astringency. This disc, the first in a projected series of his chamber music, opens with *Erkejubel* (1982) – its gritty exchanges between trumpets and trombones given 'edge' by the role of percussion and a synthesiser whose chordal textures suggest a nod to Kraftwerk amid the Stravinskian discourse. *Duo Due* (1993) finds violin and cello locked in confrontation, whose angularity is never at the expense of that subtlety of interplay which finds these instruments taking on the guise of each other to an intriguing degree, while *Frammenti di Roma* (1986) not dissimilarly features oboe, clarinet and bassoon during a sequence of exchanges whose aphoristic nature teasingly and

obliquely evokes the historical fragments in which the Italian capital abounds.

Of the other two pieces, *Scheherazade forteller videre* ('Sheherazade continues recounting', 1986) combines violin and harp over six imagined tales, each separated by Rimsky-Korsakov's indelible refrain, and which finally disperse into ethereal realms. *Canis lagopus* (2001) is also the Latin name for the Norwegian mountain fox, an endangered species evoked in terms combative but never aggressive – string quintet pursuing a tensile discourse kept on edge by some militaristic percussion. As with all the performances here, there is little doubt as to the musicians' belief in this music, enhanced by the close-focus yet never airless sound and detailed booklet-notes. Roll on Vol 2.

Richard Whitehouse

Mykietyn · Szymański

Mykietyn String Quartet No 2

Szymański Two Pieces. Four Pieces. Five Pieces

Royal String Quartet

Hyperion ⑤ CDA68085 (67' • DDD)



The Royal String Quartet have made a good reputation in a fairly wide repertoire,

including their support of modern composers and in particular the avant-garde among their fellow-Poles. This is no light matter, with the experimental ideas much taken up in Poland since the fall of Communism. Two figures prominent in this new wave are Paweł Szymański and Paweł Mykietyn, born respectively in 1954 and 1971 so no longer *enfants terribles*. They share a subtle ear for string textures and a capacity for demanding much of their interpreters' techniques.

Szymański is represented here entirely by short pieces for string quartet, after the fashion of Webern, and indeed sometimes also after Webern's delicacy of texture. He experiments with microtones, with shared slow *glissandos*, with harmonics, with minimalist ideas like the endless ticking of two notes. The longest piece lasts almost 12 minutes; most of them are about four or five minutes long. They are often ingenious, beguiling to the ear, entertaining in their difficult techniques for achieving something very simple. But for a sense of making them the materials for longer pieces of music, one must turn to Mykietyn, and a string quartet lasting over 12 minutes. He too draws on microtones and profuse use of harmonics but the



Experimental Poles: the Royal String Quartet tackle more uncompromising works by composers from their homeland

comparative length of his piece leads him to form a structure of a more ambitious kind than those of his colleague. There is still the sense that ingenuity is made its own end. **John Warrack**

Reger

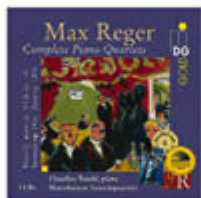
'Complete Piano Quartets'

Piano Quartets - No 1, Op 113; No 2, Op 133.

Serenade, Op 141a. Three Duos, Op 131b

Claudius Tanski *pf* **Mannheim Quartet**

Dabringhaus und Grimm © 2 MDG336 1869-2 (116' • DDD)



Max Reger's Piano Quartet Op 113

launches itself with a compositional

exclamation mark, a wantonly illegal chromatic sidestep that a beat later sidesteps home to D minor, and the argument could be pressed that Reger peaks too soon; that the piece can never quite muster up enough strength of mind to be as outré again – and, given that it sprawls over nearly 50 minutes, had Reger wanted to stamp down on conformity with another Monty Python foot, there was scope to do so. But Claudius Tanski and

the Mannheim String Quartet hear this opening as Reger handing them their flying wings. Because no matter how deterministic and packed with notes, Reger's piece remains built on instability – the subliminal message that the music might again fall through a stage trapdoor never fully goes away. Rumours persist that the first movement was the product of an all-night booze-up: fully imbibed, Reger apparently composed through the night; but, true or not, the music tumbles forwards like the wordy wisdom of a gregarious bar-room philosopher.

Tanski and the Mannheim Quartet keep the structural paragraphs stretched tight, expressive engorgement oozing out of the music's yeasty fabric rather than being imposed from any sense of musicianly duty. As a fully functioning 12-tone tonality bases the sweetness in an underlying tartness, the third-movement *Larghetto* is peculiarly lovely, the fulsome and ardent playing steered by this ostensible harmonic contradiction. The Op 133 Quartet is very obviously rooted in Brahms and is soberer – and again Reger's slow movement feels most heartfelt. A faux-Mozartian Serenade and Three Duos, a dazzlingly smart Bachian paraphrase, make up the balance. Cheers! **Philip Clark**

Stanford

Piano Trio No 2, Op 73.

Piano Quartet No 1, Op 15^a

Gould Piano Trio with ^a**David Adams** *va*

Naxos © 8 573388 (61' • DDD)



Completed in April 1879 and premiered the following month at one of Hans Richter's

Festival Concerts in London by a distinguished ad hoc ensemble including the composer-pianist Xaver Scharwenka, Stanford's First Piano Quartet proves quite a find, its superbly swaggering outer movements framing a captivating 'hop, skip and jump' of a *Scherzo*, whose contrastingly serene Trio melody reappears to magical effect at the end of the gloriously long-breathed, memorably heartfelt slow movement. Small wonder the gifted 26-year-old Irishman was beginning to make a name for himself both at home and abroad. The Second Piano Trio dates from two decades later and represents another mightily impressive achievement: not only is the writing brimming with skill and confidence, there's also a wealth of eloquent inspiration, above all perhaps the

piano's nobly Beethovenian main theme that launches the *Andante* slow movement, as well as much subtle thematic interplay and harmonic resourcefulness besides.

It would be hard to improve upon the Gould Piano Trio's irresistibly stylish and fervent advocacy of both these uncommonly rewarding works; indeed, they sound as if they have been playing this repertoire for many moons, and in the Piano Quartet they generate an infectious rapport with the excellent viola player David Adams. What's more, both production values (Michael Ponder, working in the the Music Room at Champs Hill, West Sussex) and annotation (our very own Jeremy Dibble) are all one could desire. A coupling to relish, this, and most enthusiastically recommended.

Andrew Achenbach

Steen-Andersen

Black Box Music. Run Time Error

Oslo Sinfonietta / Håkon Stene

Dacapo ② DVD 2 110413

(73' • PAL • 16:9 • 4.0 surround & stereo • O • s)

Bonus material: 'Run Time Error - Behind the Scenes', a film by Ida Bach Jensen



Simon Steen-Andersen (b1976) is nothing if not referential in his concern to concretise his musical

concerns, as the two works on this DVD make plain. Thus *Black Box Music* might be described as a 'concerto for puppet theatre', in which the box of the title is made a scenic backdrop for the soloist's hands to fill the available space with gestures that do not direct the music so much as provide a visual parallel. The outcome, with musicians providing an aural accompaniment alive with incidental detail yet relatively static in terms of overall evolution, is arresting if lacking in those provocations that make certain of Maurizio Kagel's theatrical pieces absorbing on repetition. Not dissimilar is *Run Time Error*, a site-specific work where the composer is also performer – his instruments being the contents of the venue (the Black Diamond in Copenhagen) used according to a pre-arranged route; the results 'interpreted' by joysticks controlling twin audio channels and a double video projection. It all makes for diverting viewing/listening but is relatively lightweight compared to the visceral emotional charge from the 'suite for global junk' which is Gabriel Prokofiev's *Import/Export* (3/11).

These performances are conveyed with unstinting clarity as regards both the

playing of the Oslo Sinfonietta (with percussionist Håkon Stene) and the precision of the visual imagery. The booklet has detailed introductions to both works, while the DVD features 'raw versions' of the latter piece showing just how Steen-Andersen created the result from separate sources – and demonstrating how the whole can sometimes end up being less than the sum of its parts.

Richard Whitehouse

Stravinsky · Szymanowski

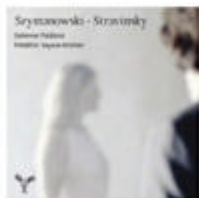
Stravinsky The Fairy's Kiss. Pulcinella

Szymanowski Mythes, Op 30.

Trois caprices de Paganini, Op 40

Solenne Païdassi vs Frédéric Vaysse-Knitter pf

Aperté ② AP095 (72' • DDD)



Szymanowski's pieces are likely to be less well known to collectors than

Stravinsky's but they are attractive, inventive and subtle, well worth revival. The three *Mythes* evoke Arethusa, with her fountain, the self-absorbed Narcissus, and the pursuit of the wood nymphs by Pan. There is a strongly erotic content to each of them, delicately handled in the first two by this very sensitive and intelligent pair of artists, imbued with a more alarming violence in the third, as one would expect. The *Paganini Caprices* are curious responses to the old virtuoso, the second of them almost sentimental. The third (No 24) is that most variation-prone of tunes beloved by composers from Brahms and Rachmaninov to Lutosławski and Blacher, and in many other directions for the clever simplicity of its structure, melodic, rhythmic and harmonic. Szymanowski mostly uses the harmonic basis for his elegant, ingenious ramblings, returning to the famous melody almost apologetically at the conclusion.

Païdassi and Vaysse-Knitter preserve the characteristic subtlety of their manner in Stravinsky's two suites, where many duos go for a more robust and extrovert style. Stravinsky himself approved the 'delicacy' of his collaborator and concert partner, co-arranger of these pieces, Samuel Dushkin, and in these performances it is an 18th-century grace, almost courtesy of style that informs their performances, rather than the more supposedly characteristic Stravinskian vehemence which many players go for. It is charmingly done, without a whiff of the sentimentality that Stravinsky would certainly have abhorred, and the recording is well attuned to the

intricacy of textures which Szymanowski in particular requires of his performers.

John Warrack

Suk

'Complete Works for String Quartet'

String Quartets – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 31.

Quartet Movement. Ballade. Barcarolle.

Menuet. Meditation on an Old Czech Hymn,

'St Wenceslas'. Piano Quintet, Op 8^a

Minguet Quartet with ^aMatthias Kirschnereit pf

CPO ② CPO777 652-2 (125' • DDD)



We do not hear enough Josef Suk. That thought strikes me whenever the rare

opportunities arise to listen to the music of this Czech master as on this well-produced CPO set. The strongest works are undeniably on disc 1, where the two numbered quartets (1896, 1910-11) are separated by the 1915 revision of No 1's *Allegro giocoso* finale. This proved, in a reversal of Beethoven's experience with his Op 130, too remote in style and scale to make a satisfactory conclusion to this remarkably fresh, poised quartet. There is something of Mendelssohn's spirit in its charm and youthful vigour which the Minguet Quartet catch very nicely in their lively performance. Whatever dissatisfied Suk about the finale does not seem obvious in this rendition, in which it seems of a piece with the other three spans.

The mature creator can be heard in every bar of the revised finale, which stands on its own as a fine and complex example of a dance fantasy. The Second Quartet, with its more ambiguous harmonic palette and darker tonal colouring, is an altogether deeper composition and one of Suk's finest utterances in any medium. Its first three movements are slow-paced – all *Adagio* – with only the finale rising to a mild *Allegretto*; not until Shostakovich would another composer achieve a quartet as fine as this with a similar format.

Disc 2 features slighter works. Suk was only 22 when he completed Quartet No 1, although it was not his first essay in the form. He withdrew the D minor Quartet (1888) except for the central *Andante con moto*, which he liked well enough to revise in 1923 as a brief, independent Barcarolle in B flat. Pretty if insubstantial, it shows Suk's early gift for melodic string-writing. The Ballade in D minor (1890) is twice the size of the Barcarolle yet still fairly light in tone and no Chopinesque romantic essay. The largest work is the Piano Quintet in

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ANTONIO CALDARA

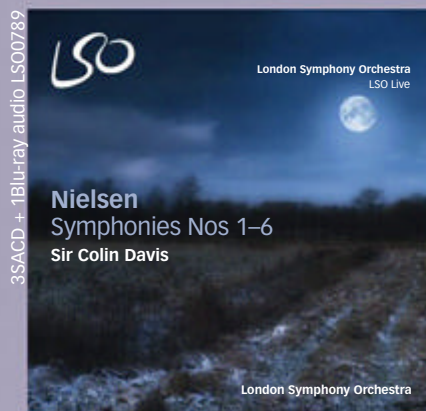
Morte e sepoltura di Christo (oratorio)
Maria Grazia Schiavo, Silvia Frigato et al.
Stavanger Symphony Orchestra / Fabio Biondi

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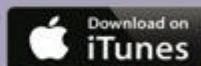
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G minor (1892-93) – the same key as Shostakovich, but there the parallels end. Revised in 1915, it remains oddly juvenile in feel for all Matthias Kirschnereit's advocacy. The set completes with a neatly turned account of *Meditation on the St Wenceslas Chorale* (1914). Lovely performances, super sound from CPO.
Guy Rickards

Telemann

'Trios and Quartets with Viola da gamba' Chaconne, 'Modéré', TWV43:e4. Sonatas - TWV42: a7; No 2, TWV43:g1; TWV43:G12. Trios - No 2, TWV42:G6; No 5, TWV42:g1

La Rêveuse

Mirare © MIR267 (62' • DDD)



La Rêveuse have hitherto recorded 17th-century music featuring viols, such as

Locke, Purcell and Henry Lawes, but now they turn their attention forwards to Telemann. This group of trios and quartets featuring viola da gamba (sometimes two of them), usually with violin or flute (or both), draws from collections published between 1718 and 1738. Flute, violin, gamba and continuo converse together with relaxed intimacy in the *Largo* at the heart of Sonata No 2 in G minor (from the collection *Quadri*, published in Hamburg in 1730), and there is keen cultivation of diverse sonorities in its quicker movements. Likewise, the chromatically tinged melancholy of the Chaconne from the sixth 'Paris' Quartet (1738) is balanced with clearly delineated strands from each individual component, all of whom combine to create an eloquent discourse.

Shapely bowing by gambist Florence Bolton and violinist Stéphan Dudermel creates a sincere rhetorical exchange in Trio No 5 in G minor (from *Six Trios*, Frankfurt, 1718), and its beguiling *Adagio* is accompanied with discretion by theorist Benjamin Perrot to poignant effect. Bolton combines intuitively with the additional gamba player Emily Audouin in a charming sonata for two viols and flute, which also features Serge Saitta's graceful flute-playing; the delicate slow movement marked *Soave* forms a lovely contrast with the vivid quick movements either side of it. Harpsichordist Carsten Lohff steps forward to take a greater share of the limelight with a masterfully despatched obbligato part in partnership with Bolton's viol in Trio No 2 in A major from *Essercizi musici* (Hamburg, 1727). **David Vickers**

Wassenaer

Six Concerti armonici

Innovation Chamber Ensemble /

Richard Jenkinson

Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0141 (57' • DDD)



As Roy Goodman's Brandenburg Consort and others have proved in the past, six

Concerti armonici published anonymously at The Hague in 1740 offer a bit of everything anyone fond of late-Baroque string concertos could possibly want: harmonic invention, surprising twists, intricate sharing of details between *concertante* violins and cello, dramatic quick movements, atmospheric slow movements, an accomplished mastery of contrapuntal ideas and idiomatic writing for all instruments from top to bottom. Their anonymity caused publishers and musicologists problems over the centuries; the most popular misattribution to Pergolesi lasted long into the 1970s (frankly, this is hard to believe on stylistic grounds). The original manuscript, found in the library of Twickel Castle near Enschede, reveals that the music was composed by Count Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer (1692-1766), a high-flying diplomat from an old and powerful aristocratic Dutch family. He wrote the concertos separately between 1725 and 1740, and agreed only reluctantly to their publication provided that he was not named. He later wrote on his manuscript that 'Some of them are tolerable, some middling, others wretched'.

The Innovation Chamber Ensemble, consisting of 14 players from the CBSO, produce sensitively bowed phrasing and finely nuanced textures, although more than a few moments are undermined by variable intonation and tuning from the violins. There are lyrical solo cello contributions in several movements (eg *Un poco andante* in No 1), and the use of a lute stop from harpsichordist Martin Perkins is a nice touch in the sublime *Largo affettuoso* of No 4. Muted strings conjure soft intimacy in the beautiful slow movement of No 5 (*A tempo comodo*), and there are *staccato* surprises and theatrically weighted textures in the ensuing climax. **David Vickers**

Selected comparison:

Brandenburg Consort, Goodman
(4/94⁸) (HYPE) CDH55155

Zemlinsky

'Complete String Quartets'

String Quartets - No 1, Op 4; No 2, Op 15;

No 3, Op 19; No 4, 'Suite', Op 25; E minor

Brodsky Quartet

Chandos © 2 CHAN10845 (152' • DDD)



'Zemlinsky: Complete String Quartets' is a slightly different deal to Chandos's last

packaging of similar repertoire, in performances by the Schoenberg Quartet, 'Zemlinsky: Chamber Music for Strings'. There you had the four standard quartets, plus *Maiblumen blühten überall* for soprano and string sextet, and Two Movements for string quartet; here, in addition to the cycle as we know it (or have known it up to now), there's a 'premiere recording', the Quartet in E minor that Zemlinsky composed while still in his early twenties, something of an invalid ticket when it was first played: it apparently failed to pass its trial at the Tonkünstlerverein, of which the composer was an active member after leaving the Vienna Conservatory. Like Schoenberg's earliest completed quartet (the D major of 1897), echoes of Brahms and Dvořák (especially) abound, the highly contrasted middle movements being perhaps the most memorable.

As to the main works, the interpretative gulf between the two sets of performances is often pretty wide, at its most obvious at the start of the Third Quartet, where the Schoenberg Quartet sound cautious, as if entering territory that's either unsafe or unknown (maybe both). The Brodskys take Zemlinsky's jagged gestures in their stride, their grasp of the music's shifting metres absolutely secure. In the Theme and Variations second movement, the Schoenbergs are strong on mystery, the Brodskys on unbridled humour and a certain sense of danger. By comparison, the Artis Quartet of Vienna (Nimbus) are more blatant than either, though their unblinking directness has its own appeal. The Brodskys turn inwards for the work's 'Romanza', a wonderful reading, bringing the music into alignment with Berg and Bartók at their greatest.

They engage passionately with the expansive Second Quartet (1913-15), a large, anguished structure that fits the troubled *fin de siècle* as securely as does Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* or Berg's *Lyric Suite*. Urgent to a fault, the Brodsky's performance nonetheless adds almost one and a half minutes to the Schoenberg Quartet's total playing time. I like their light, tripping way with the first movement of the First Quartet, again latching on to the Bohemian element, hot-foot dance-like



Eloquent discourse: Florence Bolton (left) and members of La Rêveuse record trios and quartets by Georg Philipp Telemann

passages alternating with a light *legato*. The second-movement *Allegretto* wears a Brahmsian demeanour, the Brodskys more delicately inflected here than their Schoenberg counterparts.

The Fourth Quartet opens like an episode of Bartók's 'night music' (ie the Fifth or Sixth Quartets), the 'Burleske' second movement five minutes of skilfully ordered chaos. The Schoenberg Quartet sound heavier, angrier, less suggestive of holding their own in the brawl. I suppose the principal difference between the two sets, aside from their contents, is one of relative command, which is where the Brodskys have the upper hand. While retaining a fondness for the LaSalle Quartet's pioneering and still musically potent set (now on Brilliant Classics coupled with Hans Erich Apostel's Quartet No 1, Op 7) and the boldly assured Escher Quartet on Naxos, this new double-pack can now be rated as the subtlest among the digital options, especially with that fledgling, and musically interesting, E minor Quartet added. First-rate sound.

Rob Cowan

Stg Qts – selected comparisons:

LaSalle Qt (4/79^R, 2/84^R, 8/89^R)

(DG) 479 1976GB6 or (BRIL) 9188

Artis Qt (11/98, 7/99) (NIMB) NI5563, NI5604

Schoenberg Qt (A/02) (CHAN) CHAN9772

Escher Qt (10/13, 9/14) (NAXO) 8 572813, 8 573088

'Fantasia'

'British and Finnish Piano Trios'

Bergman Piano Trio, Op 2 **Bridge** Piano Trio

No 1, 'Phantasie' **Ireland** Phantasie Trio **Sibelius**

Allegro. Andantino. Piano Trio, 'Korpo' – Fantasia

The Backman Trio

Fuga © FUGA9371 (69' • DDD)



At first glance, this might seem a bizarre programme, until one appreciates the make-up of The Backman Trio, comprising Finnish violinist Frida Backman and British pianist Marcus Andrews and cellist Ruth Beedham. Their focus is on early piano trio works in the four composers' catalogues, not least because only Bridge produced a mature Trio with his Second – and what a piece!

Only Bridge's First Trio (1907) is included, the *Phantasie* in C minor which won the 1907 Cobbett Prize, and The Backman Trio give an engaging and passionate account of it, worthy of comparison with any of their rivals – all

coupled with the Second Trio – listed below while not displacing any.

Occasionally there is edginess to their intonation, though ensemble is tight. It is a similar story with Ireland's A minor Trio (1906), beaten by the Bridge to the Cobbett Prize, earnestly and attractively played here but not really seriously challenging the competition.

The main attraction for collectors in this disc will be the premiere recording of the early Piano Trio (1939) by Erik Bergman (1911-2006). It is an apprentice piece with no trace of the keen pioneering spirit heard in almost every bar of his mature choral works or the Op 98 String Quartet, at one time available on Finlandia (7/86). The Trio has an appealing late-Romantic atmosphere and is as uncharacteristic of its creator as the *Korpo* Trio of Sibelius, of which I am a fan. The Backman's account is considerably slower than its BIS rival and not to its benefit. The little Andantino and Allegro come off better. Nice sound for a fascinating disc. **Guy Rickards**

Bridge – selected comparisons:

Roberts Trio (9/00) (BKBO) BBM1028

Dartington Trio (8/01^R) (HYPE) CDH55063

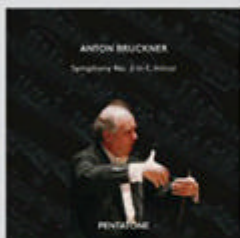
Dussek Trio (MERI) CDE84290

Ireland – selected comparisons:

Neaman, Webber, Parkin (3/79^R) (LYRI) SRCD2271

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September 2011



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Sibelius – selected comparisons:

Kuusisto, Ylonen, Gräsbeck (1/05, 12/07th) (BIS)

BIS-CD1292, BIS-CD1903/5

‘Midsummer Phantasy’

Bridge Phantasy Piano Quartet Penard

Phantasy, Op 25 Purcell Fantazias – Z734; Z735

Ensemble Contraste

Dux Ⓢ DUX1126 (49' • DDD)



The Ensemble Contraste here offer an illuminating sequence of pieces for

piano quartet, with two of Purcell's magnificent *Fantazias* arranged for the group, leading to one of Frank Bridge's finest early chamber works, this time prompted by the rules of the William Cobbett Prize. Finally comes the longest and most ambitious of the pieces here, the Piano Quartet in five movements by the French composer Olivier Penard.

It may seem an odd mixture but it works surprisingly well. The Cobbett Prize which prompted the fine Bridge work was set up partly in response to the *Fantazias* of Purcell which in turn echoed the Elizabethans. Purcell may have intended them as student exercises but they stand among his finest works, darkly profound. The Bridge is among the finest works prompted by the Cobbett formula, very different in style from the far more radical works of the composer's last period, inspired by his agonised response to the Great War and the carnage involved.

I confess I had never heard of Olivier Penard before I heard this disc but on this evidence he writes with great confidence in a style with echoes of the Impressionists but more particularly of early Stravinsky, with his vigorous, insistent rhythms and, in one place, chattering ostinato repetitions echoing *Petrushka*. The layout of the five movements is very effective, with the first a brief impressionistic introduction and the last, even shorter, an emphatic tailpiece. The three main movements, each lasting around 10 minutes, carry the main weight of argument, each one a kaleidoscope of striking ideas, very well controlled and contrasted. The Ensemble Contraste play with warmth and sympathy in music very much their own. First-rate sound.

Edward Greenfield

‘Now & Then’

Anonymous Petrone (Robertsbridge Codex)

JS Bach Three Chorale Preludes Boismortier

Concerto, Op 15 No 3 Caldini Clockwork-Toccata,

Op 68c Koomans The Jogger Meijering Sanctus

Merula La Lusignuola. La Merula

Mossenmark Childhood Scheidt Fantasia

super 'Io son ferito ai lasso' Vivaldi Concerto (after RV565)

Sirena Recorder Quartet

BIS Ⓢ BIS2115 (67' • DDD/DSD)



In their music-making, 'Sirena pass seamlessly between different eras and musical styles,'

suggests Matti Eden's note with this CD. The result is the most extraordinary, even weird, recorder concert I have ever come across. The ensemble is excellent, the arrangements ingenious, the recording (especially when reproduced in SACD) absolutely natural and evocative. The four Sirena players can choose from a great variety of instruments of different sizes and tone colours, which they play expressively and often with great virtuosity.

The programme opens enticingly with an excerpt from Vivaldi's *L'estro armonico*. Originally using violin and cello soloists, it is here heard in quite different woodwind colouring. The three favourite Bach chorales which follow are all delightfully arranged; and the following complete work, Boismortier's unusual and rare three-movement Concerto for five flutes adapts well for recorders and is equally rewarding in such a fine performance. So far so good!

Then the music becomes more problematic. Chiel Meijering's *Sanctus* may be inventive but does not sound like a Sanctus at all. It even includes a groaning vocal episode which is difficult to justify. Dick Koomans's *The Jogger* certainly jogs convincingly but Staffan Mossenmark's evocation of *Childhood* is curiously enigmatic (with more despairing cries at the end).

Fulvio Caldini's minimalist *Clockwork-Toccata* is lively but very repetitive. However, Samuel Scheidt's beautiful Fantasia on the chorale 'Io son ferito ai lasso' is the memorable highlight of the concert, showing these artists at their most radiant. The two contrasted Merula pieces also both catch the ear, and the anonymous *Petrone*, from the 14th century, makes an effective finale. Yet, even with Sirena's imaginative arrangements, all in all, this is a CD one would only want to dip into for its novelty, or play to curious friends.

Ivan March

‘Pandora's Box’

Bedford Wonderful Four-Headed Nightingale

Mason String Quartet No 2 Saunders Fletch

Zorn Pandora's Box^a

Arditti Quartet with ^aSarah Maria Sun sop

Col Legno Ⓢ WWE1CD20421 (60' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Konzerthaus, Vienna,

October 27 & 28, 2013



Rebecca Saunders's *Fletch* (2012) is the work of a composer who knows very well,

probably too well, how to turn in a commission. Tailored towards the Arditti Quartet's trademark scatchy fluidity, the piece sets itself in motion via a welded-together sonic sound effect: a *glissando* combined with behind-the-bridge trills around a harmonic meets a rapid hairpin *crescendo*. Which presumably looks great on paper, but the feeling that this notational bonbon has been imposed upon sound, which couldn't care less either way, is difficult to avoid.

Benedict Mason's String Quartet No 2 (1993) refuses to accept the string quartet in terms spelt out by such pretendy-modernism, this project instead being to penetrate inside quartet mannerisms and stock ways of responding. All six movements, bookended by two fidgety, rhythmically lopsided *scherzos*, run a particular compositional obsession into the ground: the second movement cushions pure-toned major 10ths with pale harmonic shadows that evaporate just as they are sounded; 'Alla chitarra' treats the quartet like a mutant slide guitar; while a slow movement squats inside rarefied microtonal cracks. Each movement is a character vignette but, on a point of order, the sequence we hear is different to the running order listed in the booklet.

Wonderful Four-Headed Nightingale (2013) by Luke Bedford is a tautly managed, well-heard miniature packed with expansive event, the lushness of its central theme tossed into relief by surrounding microtones and start/stop shuffling. Never knowing quite what to expect from John Zorn, the saxophonist and composer whose playing rebounds out of Ornette Coleman and Anthony Braxton, his compositional capriccio invoking Schoenberg, Zemlinsky and Viennese expressionism, *Pandora's Box*, is clever and affecting. Sarah Maria Sun soars between *Sprechstimme* and boldly sculpted melodic lines. The occasional Bernard Herrmann-like ostinato questions the stylistic fantasy – but otherwise we party like it's 1899.

Philip Clark

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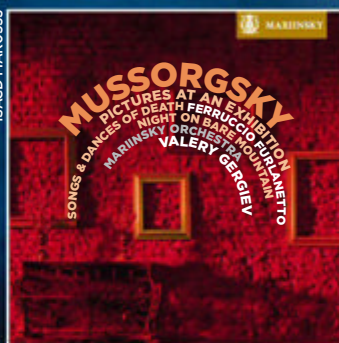
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BRASS AND WIND

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Jollity and sobriety from the Staff Band of the Norwegian Armed Forces, recording *Christianialiv*

America's proud performance tradition of music played by wind band is enhanced on **Point Blank**, featuring the large Illinois State University Wind Symphony. The five works have been written since 2000, the most substantial of them being the Percussion Concerto by Jennifer Higdon, heard here in an arrangement for wind ensemble. It is an astonishingly assured piece of writing, prodigious in ideas, cast in one movement, and with Ben Stiers as the indefatigable percussionist.

Scott McAllister's *Gone* is a dignified response to a sad personal tale, while Roy David Magnuson's *Innsmouth, Massachusetts – 1927*, disarmingly described by him as 'pulp horror music', might be a soundtrack to a David Lynch film. Bells, voices, organ, cop sirens and a wind machine add to a nightmare scenario. *Lauda* by Steve Danyew acknowledges classical forms, beginning with a passacaglia, followed in part two by a fugal subject. *Point Blank* by Paul Dooley is a vigorous, sometimes rowdy composition that dresses up drum'n'bass in orchestral garb, driven by electronic means, as a gradual winding-down brings greater transparency.

Eirik the Viking and 'In Good Company' profile two outstanding tuba players, Eirik Gjerdevik and Ruben Dura de Lamo. Gjerdevik's title-track, a tuba solo, portrays Eirik the Viking, his two-sided character first expressed in contemplative

recitative, the happy-go-lucky axe-wielder in jaunty syncopation. Composer Torstein Aagaard-Nilsen expanded the subject by adding a brass band to *Bloodaxe Lament*, a highly charged piece of music theatre in which foreground and distance are juxtaposed to great effect. The Stavanger Brass Band also accompany Gjerdevik in *Torn-Erik's Song*, a traditional Swedish melody arranged by Ray Fell into a set of variations. Frode Thingnæs's Concertino echoes his jazz background, with the four parts alternating different facets of American popular music. This performance for brass band goes with a real swing. The Bergen Tuba Quartet accompany Gjerdevik on *An Autumn Day*, an infectious novelty, as well as taking the accompanying honours in the dashing *Csárdás* by Monti.







In Good Company offers compositions a shade more cerebral, beautifully recorded in the Jesus-Christus-Kirche in Berlin. No praise can be too high for Spanish-born Ruben Dura de Lama's tuba-playing. His nimble dexterity and ability to sing a line are things of wonder in William Penn's *Capriccio* for tuba and marimba with Sabrina Ma. The other works offer wide contrasts, including the dramatic Herrmannesque piece *Etre ou ne pas être* by HF Tomasi, Danielsson's jazz-spirited *Capriccio da camera*, Armand Russell's *Suite concertante* and a quirky sonata by Morten Gaathaug. The different ensembles add their own remarkable personality.

Brass Too features the brass section of the RCO in a wide-ranging programme concluding with a masterpiece, Hindemith's *Konzertmusik* conducted by Kurt Masur. The players have a ball in the brilliant arrangement by Steven Verhelst of a suite of numbers from Piazzolla's theatre piece *Maria de Buenos Aires*. Maria's lively song is winningly played by trombonist Jorgen van Rijen before melting into the Ballad and Habanera.

Adolf Hansen's *Christiania Life* is the highlight of **Christianialiv**. The composer takes us on a whistle-stop tour of the capital's cultural and entertainment hotspots. It stands in contrast to his more sober *Serenade*, written for the Griegs' 25th wedding anniversary. Johan Svendsen's *Symphony No 2* is characterised by alert rhythms and keenly articulated phrasing. Alfred Evensen's *Norwegian Dances* are slighter than the Grieg set. Ole Olsen's *Overture* builds on tunes from his *Singspiel Svein Ured*.

Septura's CD might have been subtitled 'Songs Without Words'. Except for Mendelssohn's *Organ Sonata*, all their arrangements for brass septet are drawn from choral sources. Septura match the sincerity of Bruckner's motet texts in their noble performances; less successful are their arrangements of the Op 122 Chorale Preludes by Brahms. Schumann's Op 141 choruses for double choir are workaday with the exception of 'Talisman', his setting of a poem by Goethe. The forward balance of the recording doesn't offer much relief to the full-on sound of an undoubtedly talented group. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

- | | |
|---|--|
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Naxos © 8 573334 |
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George Szell

To the musicians who played for him George Szell could be a terrifying presence on the podium but his recordings never fail to excite and inspire, says Michael McManus

Mahler's Symphony No 1 opened my musical Book of Revelation and, once I had almost worn out Carlo Maria Giulini's Chicago recording of that piece, I urgently sought out more Mahler. Fortunately, I knew a coveted *Penguin Guide* rosette counted for something, so my second-ever classical LP was George Szell's Cleveland recording of Symphony No 4. Here was revelation reborn and re-energised. I soon discovered this was a famous recording, lauded even by those who generally thought Szell too cool and disciplined by half. To my mind, it remains one of the greatest records ever made.

So began my fascination with Szell and the superb orchestra he built by Lake Erie. I think most readers of this magazine, in some measure, have the collector's gene. In the dying days of LPs, most of Szell's recordings were long out of print and tough – sometimes nigh-impossible – to obtain. It took me several dogged years to source a second-hand copy of his live recording of Mahler's Symphony No 6 – then as rare as the corncrake, but latterly available on a budget price CD. I also scoured the *Radio Times* regularly and duly taped a handful of precious WCLV radio concert recordings, of Brahms and Mozart, Mahler and Beethoven.

George Szell's life, like so many, was dramatically changed by the ghastly situation in Europe. He was a child virtuoso born in Budapest, a composer and pianist discovered and encouraged by leading figures of the day, most notably Richard Strauss. By his mid teens he had toured Europe. In the late 1930s he took charge of the Scottish Orchestra but the looming Second World War found him in the United States, where, wisely, he remained.

In 1946, through a combination of determination, talent and political intrigue, Szell took charge of the Cleveland Orchestra. He was a notorious musical perfectionist, whose relationship with his musicians remained highly combustible throughout his 24 year tenure. They dubbed him 'Dr Cyclops'. In the early

years, a series of clear-outs of personnel took place and Szell's band began to demonstrate both sublime technical ability and also a distinctive sound, as CBS recordings from the period demonstrate. Szell dutifully tried his hand at some contemporary music – Walton, for instance (of whose Second Symphony he gave the Continental European and US premieres, and of which he made the first recording), and Samuel Barber's Piano Concerto – but it was to the classics that he was drawn, again and again.

I discussed Szell recently with the conductor Nicholas McGegan, who said how remarkable it was that, with his distinctively Central European heritage, he should have confined himself to just a handful of the late Haydn symphonies, when there are such riches elsewhere amongst the 104. That was Szell though: he would visit and revisit the pieces he knew and loved. Furthermore, programming Haydn at all in those days was relatively unusual and praiseworthy.

Intensively listening to Szell's recordings has sometimes been salutary as well as fascinating. In my salad days of unshakeable faith and enthusiasm, I would pooh-pooh those who argued that some of the Cleveland studio recordings displayed technical perfection, but too little warmth or spontaneity. In fact, Szell himself was not insensitive to this charge. In a famous interview, he once observed: 'The borderline is very thin between clarity and coolness, self-discipline and severity... There exist different nuances of warmth – from the chaste warmth of Mozart to the sensuous warmth of Tchaikovsky to the lascivious passions of *Salome*... I cannot pour chocolate over asparagus.'

The key, really, was that Szell sought always to respect the intentions of the composer. Another similarly minded colleague of his who also aspired to subjectivity, Günter Wand, once told me that the only occasion on which he had ever mistaken somebody else's recording for one of his was when he heard Szell's Concertgebouw recording of Mozart's Symphony No 34 on a car radio. There is certainly a significant

'He was a notorious musical perfectionist, whose relationship with his musicians remained highly combustible'

DEFINING MOMENTS

- **June 7, 1897**
Born in Budapest
- **December 9, 1942**
Debut at the Metropolitan Opera, New York with Richard Strauss's *Salome*
- **January 24, 1946**
Announced as new conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra
- **May 15-30, 1970**
Final tour and concerts – Far East and Anchorage, Alaska
- **July 30, 1970**
Dies in Cleveland, aged 73

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Dvořák
Slavonic Dances
Cleveland
Orchestra / Szell
Sony Classical
download



contrast between Szell's studio recordings for CBS and those live recordings I captured in my teens, which have since been supplemented by a range of other concert recordings, on CDs of varying provenance. The live performances are no less technically excellent, but interpretatively they are noticeably freer. It's a shame so few have been commercially released. Nonetheless, there are some remarkable treasures to be found among the studio recordings, many of which are now available only as downloads – for instance his classical-sounding Mahler, his monumental accounts of the Brahms symphonies and fine performances of late symphonies by Schubert, Dvořák and Tchaikovsky. He was devoted to Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony and his sole studio recording of it has extraordinary intensity and power.

Once he was ensconced in Cleveland, Szell liked to spend his summers in Europe – playing golf as well as making music – and there is often much more charm and warmth in the recordings he made here, even in the studio, as compared with his work in Ohio. This is true from the pair of superb Dvořák recordings he made with the Czech Philharmonic in the late 1930s, right through to his 1960s work in London and Amsterdam. His recording with the Concertgebouw Orchestra of the Second Symphony of Sibelius has long been recognized as a classic, as has the legendary Decca recording of the Brahms D minor Piano Concerto with Sir Clifford Curzon and the LSO. George Szell was a tricky martinet, but listen to his recorded legacy – and you will soon discover that he was never, ever dull! **G**

Instrumental



Bryce Morrison reviews the latest Spanish offering from Jordi Masó:

'Less easily exportable than Falla, Granados, or the ever-enchanting Mompou, Turina remains dear to Spain' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



Jed Distler on an all-variation recital from Benjamin Hochman:

'The pianist's confident and polished fingerwork makes a compelling case for Knussen's Variations' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**

JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-1006

Gil Shaham *vn*

Canary Classics (M) (2) CC14 (76' • DDD)



All that is unusual and unexpected about this recording is encapsulated in the second movement of the First Sonata, which – among other quirks – despite starting with a quaver rest, is set at such a sprightly lilt that it feels more like a down-beat. But the fact remains that Shaham's playing is so clean, clear and precise (and contained, within the cavernous shape of his 1699 Stradivari), and the thought behind everything he plays so unassailable, that to listen to it is to feel safe with music that is often manhandled, even if it is challenging to one's perception of it.

Shaham does pull many of the phrases around to a risky degree but it never feels like the egomania of other performances (partly because there is no bending of the tuning) and this is an enormous relief. Some of the movements, particularly in the First Sonata and Partita, have a chamber performance quality – from the closeness of the recording and dryness of the studio acoustics – that create an intimate and moving sense of authenticity. It is only the Chaconne that is in any way problematic: in a movement that is a miraculous study in what Bach was able to do with plain old 3/4 time, and a performance so rich in tone and muscularity, there is a frustratingly inconsistent lack of pulse. This recording may be a challenge for devotees of these pieces but only because it is so uniquely Shaham's voice: it is impossible to listen to it without having a positive artistic experience. **Caroline Gill**

JS Bach

Six Cello Suites, BWV1007-1012

Isang Enders *vc*

Berlin Classics (F) (2) 0300552BC;

(F) (3) (140907IE (143' • DDD)



Youth has long been thought of as a considerable impediment to the artistically successful – live or recorded – performance of Bach's Cello Suites. But Isang Enders has always done everything early, having been Principal Cello of the Dresden Staatskapelle at the age of 20, and his uncomplicated directness is one of the many strengths of this spotless performance of these complicated pieces.

There is not only a strong sense of the dance behind all the movements (even in the slow examples, whose speeds he chooses to pull up even further than most, especially in the Sarabandes), but of pulse: the forward motion of everything he plays is driven by a continual, metronomic tick that, although inaudible, is constantly transferred from Enders to the listener. That heartbeat runs from movement to movement with a consistency that also supports his choice to order the Suites by way of what he sees to be their harmonic progression (V, II, IV, III, I, VI); similarly Ditta Rohmann's minutely crafted pair of volumes (Hungaroton, 5/14, 11/14).

The studio conditions of the disc work particularly well for the intimacy of these pieces – even though the sound of Enders's Gagliano is a little loud for the proximity of the recording – and the lack of any reverberation beyond that of the instrument itself allows for an intense connection with the notes that would be absent had he chosen a church setting in which to record works he himself describes as 'sacred'. You are left with the feeling that it doesn't matter that he has done this so young – he'll record them again and, hopefully, again. **Caroline Gill**

JS Bach

Italian Concerto, BWV971. Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo, BWV992. Three-Part Invention No 11, BWV797. Partita No 1, BWV825. Two-Part Invention No 14,

BWV785. Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV903

Claire-Marie Le Guay *pf*

Mirare (F) MIR264 (59' • DDD)



Claire-Marie Le Guay is a pianist of broad interests, with repertoire ranging right up to the present day, but this is her first disc devoted to Bach. She presents an enticing array of works, combining the ubiquitous with the more esoteric.

From the outset, her playing is strong and assured; her fingerwork is seamless (as you might expect of one who has recorded Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes*), and she dispatches the outer movements of the *Italian Concerto* with aplomb. She doesn't stint on ornamentation either, but it's always judiciously applied. The *Capriccio on the departure of a beloved brother* is given a warmly engaged reading, though I find Kempff's non-interventionist approach particularly telling here, heightening moments of plangency such as the stepwise descending bass towards the end of the first movement. Occasionally you sense that Le Guay is trying too hard, not least in the *Adagiosissimo* of this piece or in the 11th Three-Part Invention, which is peppered with pauses and *rubatos*, wreathing it in a kind of nostalgia which will be deliciously inauthentic or vaguely annoying, depending on your point of view.

In the First Partita, the individual movements are well characterised, but others are even more effective. No one makes the Gigue dance and sparkle quite as brilliantly as Anderszewski. That may be too fast for some, but compare Le Guay with Perahia in a movement as outwardly simple as the Menuet and you find in the American a greater wealth of articulation and subtlety. To end, a precisely articulated *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*, but turn to Hewitt or Edwin Fischer and you find a greater sense of the work's undoubtedly extemporised beginnings. Le Guay is finely

recorded but I'm not sure there's enough about her playing to make this an essential addition to the Bach library. **Harriet Smith**

Partita No 1 – selected comparisons:

Anderszewski (1/03) (VIRG) 545526-2

Perabla (2/10) (SONY) 88697 44361-2

Capriccio, BWV992 – selected comparison:

Kempff (DG) 439 108-2GGA

Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue – selected comparisons:

Hewitt (11/94) (HYPE) CDA66746

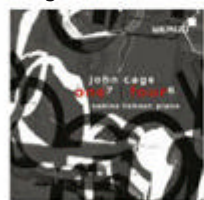
E Fischer (PEAR) GEMM0016

Cage

One⁷. Four⁶

Sabine Liebner *pf*

Wergo © WER6797-2 (60' • DDD)



Music notation is a map providing points of orientation that allow players to walk the interpretative walk, their idea of how a piece might journey through time corresponding – hopefully – with the composer's own. But John Cage's late-period number pieces throw up precisely the opposite interpretative approach: Cage specifies notes and chords, and allies them to a time frame in which they can be placed; but the actual sounds to be used, and their ultimate duration, are left to the performer's discretion.

Few performers of New York School compositions show sounder judgement and greater acumen than the German pianist Sabine Liebner, whose Cage, Feldman and Earle Brown recordings are always conceived thoughtfully and executed deftly. *Four*⁶ (1990) challenges the performer to keep four separate strata evolving concurrently – no easy task on one piano. So Liebner takes her time. From the margins of audibility, the first sound you hear is a gently fluttering harmonic mist of massaged piano strings which fades back into silence. And taking her time allows Liebner to signpost the characteristic sonic traits of the other three parts clearly: 'noise' sounds derived from the body of the instrument, individual notes that have been prepared with miscellaneous objects, and notes struck in the conventional way, fingers against keyboard.

'Anarchic harmony' was Cage's way of describing the randomised layering that resulted as his number pieces ran their unpredictable course; but Liebner's sensitivity for shape-shifting sound around an emerging structure, her intuition for when new sounds should be triggered while others decay, demonstrates the responsibility that comes with open-form

freedom. *One*⁷ maroons erratic, sporadic and volatile sound events inside sanctuaries of silence and once again Liebner has thought each sound through, whether it be a conventionally played note, a punched cluster or a string from inside the piano made to sing via a sustaining device. Anarchy must never be mistaken for misanthropic chaos. **Philip Clark**

Chopin

'1846, dernière année à Nohant'

Cello Sonata, Op 65^a. Barcarolle, Op 60. Three Mazurkas, Op 63. Mazurka No 45, Op 67 No 4. Two Nocturnes, Op 62. Three Waltzes, Op 64

© **Emmanuelle Bertrand** *vc* **Pascal Amoyel** *pf*

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2199 (73' • DDD)



The latest release from this highly praised duo works beautifully on several levels. First, the programme consists entirely of works completed in 1846, the last year Chopin spent at Nohant, the family home of his lover George Sand he had shared with her since 1839. The following year, the couple separated. Chopin wrote nothing of significance after that (he died two years later). So – interesting from a chronological/historical perspective. Secondly, the music Chopin produced at this time provides, in retrospect, an extraordinary juxtaposition. 'How can one possibly believe,' ask Amoyel and Bertrand in an introductory note to their disc's first class booklet, 'that the so-called "Minute Waltz" could have been composed in the same year as the Cello Sonata or the Barcarolle? That the [C sharp minor Waltz] is contemporary with the final Nocturne, Op 62 No 2?' Thirdly, if one had never heard a note of Chopin before and wanted to know what he was all about, this varied selection of his works would, by happenstance, provide an ideal introduction.

Finally, the performances of Amoyel and Bertrand (very well recorded in an intimate but not claustrophobic acoustic) are aptly scaled to the salon rather than the concert hall. Does Amoyel make the Barcarolle a little laboured after its climax? Perhaps; but then afterwards he floats the right hand over the barcarolle rhythm to magical effect. In the Sonata, the balance between Amoyel and Bertrand's mellifluous cello strike me as near ideal in the problematic first movement of the Sonata, and they observe its repeat, unlike other fine versions by such as Ma and Ax (Sony) and Kliegel and Glemser (Naxos). If Amoyel

has nothing particular to say about the three Waltzes, Op 64 (unshowy and stylish), in the two Nocturnes, Op 62, he conjures up with great sensitivity an image of the heartbroken composer in lonely contemplation at Nohant. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Vc Son – selected comparisons:

Ma, Ax (6/95) (SONY) SK53112

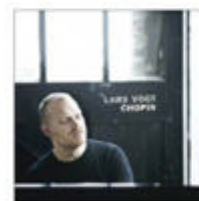
Kliegel, Glemser (11/96) (NAXO) 8 553159

Chopin

Ballade No 1, Op 23. Nocturnes – No 1, Op 9 No 1; No 2, Op 9 No 2; No 7, Op 27 No 1; No 8, Op 27 No 2; No 20, Op *posth*; No 21, Op *posth*. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35. Scherzo No 1, Op 20

Lars Vogt *pf*

AVI-Music © AVI8553267 (80' • DDD)



Lars Vogt is a pianist I admire greatly, though Chopin is not a composer with whom I'd readily associate him. In the booklet interview the pianist confides, 'I've always loved Chopin, albeit somewhat from a distance'. The only piece which has featured consistently in his recitals is the C sharp minor Nocturne, Op *posth*, and this is one of the best things here – beautiful and quite unselfconscious. Elsewhere, though, doubts arise.

The First Ballade sets the scene: it's a little too ponderous and climaxes sound a touch laboured, rather than emerging inevitably from the music as they do with Zimerman or, even more strikingly, Argerich in her unfettered 1959 radio recording. It's almost as if Vogt has spent too much time thinking about this music rather than living it, so it can come across as over-intellectualised. There are times in the Nocturnes where I wanted more *bel canto* and he lacks the sense of inevitability that you find with Pires, particularly in the first of Op 9, though the second of the set is more convincing.

The First Scherzo doesn't lack for rhetoric, particularly in the fearsome closing moments; but, compared to Pogorelich (admittedly extreme) or Rubinstein, Vogt seems somewhat buttoned-up. As for the Sonata, right from the opening I hanker after a greater sense of drive. Though Vogt is eager to bring out the work's rapt moments, the *Scherzo* is tame indeed compared to Rachmaninov (but then so is everyone else) or, among modern-day pianists, Freire. And though you can make out every note in the finale, which is more than can be said for Rachmaninov, it lacks the sinister edge of Hamelin and, supremely, Cortot.

I'm sorry not to be more enthusiastic about this: it's not that Chopin and Vogt are ill-matched but more that the relationship between pianist and composer needs time to mature. **Harriet Smith**

Pf Son No 2 – selected comparisons:

Freire (A/05⁸) (DECC) 478 2181DH

Hamelin (2/09) (HYPE) CDA67706

Rachmaninov (RCA) 88843 07392-2

Cortot (EMI) 704907-2

Nocturnes – selected comparison:

Pires (10/96) (DG) 447 096-2GH2 or 477 9568GM2

Scherzo No 1 – selected comparisons:

Pogorelich (4/99) (DG) 439 947-2GH or 477 9993GM2

Rubinstein (EMI) 455334-2

Ballade No 1 – selected comparisons:

Zimmerman (10/88) (DG) 423 090-2GH

Argerich (7/10) (DG) 477 7557GH

Debussy

24 Préludes

Gilead Mishory *pf*

NEOS Ⓢ ② NEOS21303/4 (84' • DDD)



With Debussy's *Préludes* attracting some exceptional recordings (and

I include as comparisons only those by contemporary pianists), it's a bold move by the Israeli pianist Gilead Mishory to offer up his own reading. His justification for the set is that, being a composer as well as a pianist, he can offer a very particular insight into this repertoire.

Certainly, he has a sure sense of structure and pacing, and his playing is gratifyingly free of mannerism. In a piece such as 'Les collines', he's more deliberate than Bavouzet, who is superbly insouciant, or the always sharply dramatic Zimmerman.

In the more virtuoso writing, in pieces such as 'Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest', Mishory doesn't have the sheer technical élan of Zimmerman or Osborne, with the former imbuing the piece with an almost Wagnerian sense of drama. And in 'Le vent dans la plaine' Mishory opts for more pedal than Zimmerman but also imparts a playfulness along similar lines to Bavouzet's. Everywhere, you're constantly reminded of Debussy's extraordinary switches of sound worlds, a feature that becomes still more striking in Book 2.

A real pea-souper descends in Mishory's 'Brouillards', thanks to judicious pedalling. In the more biting numbers, he perhaps underplays the element of subversiveness – and that goes for pieces as different as 'La puerta', where Osborne captures the malevolent edge with more subtlety than anyone, and 'Pickwick', intentionally

overblown in Zimmerman's hands. Mishory's fairies in 'Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses' are less ethereal than those of Bavouzet – who is very dry here, and brilliantly airborne. In the last two numbers, again Mishory's technique is less prodigious than some: his 'Tierces alternées' doesn't billow with the insouciance of Bavouzet, while 'Feux d'artifice' burns a degree less brilliantly than the likes of Zimmerman, Osborne and Bavouzet. **Harriet Smith**

Selected comparisons:

Zimmerman (3/94) (DG) 435 773-2GH2

Osborne (10/06) (HYPE) CDA67530

Bavouzet (7/07) (CHAN) CHAN10421

Dohnányi

'The Complete Solo Piano Music, Vol 3'

Ruralia hungarica, Op 32a. Variations on a Hungarian Folksong, Op 29. Three Pieces, Op 23. Gavotte and Musette. Naila Waltz. Two Waltzes after Johann Strauss

Martin Roscoe *pf*

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA38033 (79' • DDD)



this music cycle, and with a superb disc of the two piano concertos (hopefully the *Variations on a Nursery Theme* will follow), to say nothing for an early disc of the two piano quintets, there is a wealth of material to delight and consider.

Dohnányi's legendary status as a pianist, teacher and composer is confirmed not only in Roscoe's wide-ranging programme but in performances as commanding and warm-hearted as you could wish. His most substantial offering is the *Ruralia hungarica*, which later appeared in a variety of forms (I recall a performance for violin and piano by Alfred Campoli). A seven-movement accumulation of Hungarian melodies and ideas, it vividly contrasts gentle musings with vigorous virtuoso ripostes. The fifth movement, of 'rustic simplicity, delicacy and tenderness', reminds you of how so many of Dohnányi's piano works can cut down into teasing and affectionate encores.

The *Variations on a Hungarian Theme* should never have been allowed to slip out of the repertoire and the three waltz paraphrases are delicious confections, spun off by Roscoe in relaxed rather than pressured style. Here he allows you your own space, never forcing the issue, though he ends *Du und Du* in a blaze of ballroom light. Superb sound and presentation make this a delectable disc. **Bryce Morrison**

Franck



'Father of the Organ Symphony'

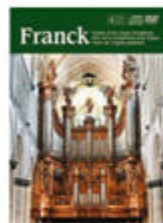
David Noël-Hudson, Jean-Pierre Griveau,

Olivier Penin, Joris Verdin *orgs*

Fugue State Films Ⓢ ④ ② CDs + ② DVD

FSFDVD009 (5h 49' + 145' • DDD • NTSC •

16:9 • DTS5.0 & DD2.0 • s)



As with previous deluxe issues dedicated to Aristide Cavaillé-Coll and Charles-Marie Widor, Fugue State Films has

(through another crowd-funding campaign) produced what will surely prove to be the most authoritative and comprehensive filmed survey and detailed exploration of César Franck's organ music. As a character he remains somewhat inscrutable. Although a fair amount of biographical material is dropped into the various features, it is clearly up to the listener/viewer to judge quite how much of Franck's inner life was reflected in his organ music. What it does reveal is that he was much more than the Pater Seraphicus of legend.

With almost six hours of video to digest, it is best to start with Eric Lebrun's superbly assembled 'Life of an Organist' feature. His engaging delivery is beautifully supported by first-rate visuals captured in the Parisian churches where Franck served, notably Notre-Dame de Lorette, where he was appointed assistant organist in 1847, and Sainte-Clotilde where he was titulaire from 1858 until his death.

The celebrated dozen great organ works that Franck left form an encyclopedia of mid-19th-century French organists' tastes and expectations. They are all played by David Noël-Hudson on three historically appropriate instruments. Of these, that situated in Saint-Omer's cathedral enjoys the grandest moments. Assisted by two hard-working (and well wrapped-up) registrants and a discreetly placed heater, it is fascinating to witness the spartan conditions in which this music must first have been played. Noël-Hudson also introduces each piece, unravelling their various complexities and attempting (successfully) to explain Franck's favourite compositional techniques of melodic extension, canon and the like. However, his commentary can veer towards the flat – unlike his playing, which flows effortlessly and dutifully observes every nuance of the carefully marked scores. He balances poetry with a deep sense of form and also makes a convincing case for a 'subjective programme' which cyclically links the late, great Three Chorales of 1890.



Doing Bach early: prodigious talent Isang Enders makes his first recording of the Cello Suites (review on page 84)

Of the other featured players, Jean-Pierre Griveau makes the best out of the modest two-manual choir organ in Orléans Cathedral. The elfin charm of the Poco allegro in F sharp minor (from the late *L'organiste* anthology) is a particular highlight. Finally, Joris Verdin works his magic (and knees) on five predominantly slow pieces from the same publication on an 1891 Mustel harmonium. If one closes one's eyes, one could almost be listening to a couple of accordionists playing by a pavement café somewhere in the Latin Quarter. *Charmant!*

Malcolm Riley

Messiaen

La Nativité du Seigneur

Tom Winpenny *org*

Naxos ® 8 573332 (61' • DDD)

Played on the organ of the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, St Albans

Messiaen

Les Corps Glorieux. Offrande au Saint-Sacrement. Prélude. Monodie. Verset pour la fête de la dédicace

Kevin Bowyer *org*

Priory ® PRCD1142 (72' • DDD)

Played on the organ of Glasgow University Memorial Chapel



Les Corps Glorieux and *La Nativité du Seigneur* are Olivier Messiaen's two major pre-war organ cycles, works that helped clarify the rhythmic and harmonic specifics of his compositional language and his taste for dividing overarching structures into thematically interlinked chapters. Tom Winpenny's *La Nativité du Seigneur* is cool to the point of reticence and only a qualified success. The opening movement, 'La Vierge et l'Enfant', is crisp but clinical and alarm bells start ringing. 'Le Verbe' really ought to leave you punch drunk but Winpenny is reluctant to make Messiaen's sharply delineated contrasts count for much. And with the likes of Jennifer Bate and Olivier Latry still readily available, this can be nobody's idea of good enough.

In contrast, Kevin Bowyer's *Les Corps Glorieux* – played on the organ of Glasgow University Memorial Chapel – is quite the ear-opener. Naxos locates the listener in the middle distance from the organ but

Priory's sound environment is more immediate and earthy. Bowyer keeps his nerve during the first movement, 'Subtilité des Corps Glorieux', delivering Messiaen's monochrome plainsong-derived line with poker-face fingers that resist the temptation to sex anything up. The great dramatic schism in the cycle occurs with the fourth section, 'Combat de la Mort et de la Vie', and Bowyer pushes the levels beyond the red. Harmonic fields collide with volcanic impact and the music temporarily loses control of its senses; the contrasted second section, a flute-toned retort, is all sweetness and light.

Bowyer also offers *Offrande au Saint-Sacrement* and *Prélude*, juvenilia with attitude discovered after Messiaen's death, and a pair of rarities, *Verset pour la fête de la dédicace* (written as an exam text piece) and *Monodie* (for his assistant). Nothing momentous, but very satisfying to my inner Messiaen-geek. **Philip Clark**

Prokofiev

'Piano Sonatas, Vol 2'

Piano Sonatas – No 9, Op 103. No 10, Op 137 (fragment). Two Sonatinas, Op 54.

Cello Sonata, Op 119^a

^aRaphael Wallfisch *vc* Peter Donohoe *pf*

Somm ® SOMMCD256 (64' • DDD)

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Our concerts are held in the lovely concert hall overlooking the garden, next to the villa where the Waltons lived. We stay at the 4* Albergo San Montano in the small resort of Lacco Ameno, a few minutes' drive from La Mortella with spectacular views of the Bay of Naples.

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FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS



Even if Prokofiev sonata cycles are no longer rarer than hen's teeth, Boris Berman's

1990s Chandos sequence has remained a plausible first choice until now, flattered by Trygg Tryggvason-supervised engineering in spacious-sounding venues. Peter Donohoe's involvement with this music goes beyond that of an executant (he prepared a Boosey & Hawkes edition back in the 1980s) and the understated, 'domestic' Ninth is the one Prokofiev sonata he has never previously tackled on disc. In the event his reading proves just a little brusque, accomplished as it is. Sviatoslav Richter enjoyed far dodgier sound in 1958, not to mention a piano that had seen better days, yet somehow the expressive range of the finale was more potently conveyed in Moscow – the fast music crisper, the slower passages more emotive, the final return of Prokofiev's keynote idea magically hushed in a fashion unmatched by any subsequent rival.

Although this second instalment of Donohoe's series is intelligently planned to convey the compositional preoccupations of the composer's last years, its good intentions are somewhat undermined by dowdy packaging and accident-prone booklet-notes (not his own). It matters little that Kabalevsky is cited as one of the prime victims of Andrey Zhdanov's 'anti-formalist' purge of Soviet music. More damaging is the assertion that Prokofiev's projected Tenth and Eleventh piano sonatas were to be 'based on new material' when we know Prokofiev planned de-fanged reworkings of the two earlier Sonatinas.

Placed between them is a fine account of the late Cello Sonata. The problem for potential punters is that work's sheer ubiquity on disc, however well Raphael Wallfisch and Peter Donohoe actually play. Still to come are the trilogy of so-called War Sonatas, generally regarded as Prokofiev's greatest and no strangers to Donohoe's discography. **David Gutman**

Pf Son No 9 – selected comparisons:

Berman (CHAN) CHAN9211 or CHAN9637

Richter (NAXO) 8 111387

Schubert

Allegro, 'Lebensstürme', D947. Divertissement à la hongroise, D818. Trois Marches militaires, D733. Deutscher mit zwei Trios und zwei Ländler, D618

Jan Vermeulen, Veerle Peeters *pf*

Etcetera © KTC1501 (71' • DDD)



Having recorded Schubert's complete piano music on period instruments,

Jan Vermeulen now launches a cycle dedicated to the composer's abundant catalogue of piano duets, abetted by his former student Veerle Peeters. Their 1825–30 Tröndlin instrument has a basically gentle sonority that nevertheless conveys power and definition, as well as a wonderful muted quality in softer passages.

The disc commences with an energetic, forward-moving and beautifully thought-out reading of the *Lebensstürme* duo. The pianists' sensitivity and stylistic surety masks the three-movement *Divertissement à la hongroise*'s rambling tendencies, while the instrument's timbral distinctions particularly hit home, for example in the 'semi-sustained' pedal effects in the *Andante*'s cadenza-like episode or the way the long *Allegretto*'s tremolos vary in shape and expression, rather than rattle on like a silent-movie pianola. The duo wisely refrain from hurrying the first *Marche militaire*'s *Allegro vivace*, allowing the music to breathe without losing excitement. The second march takes on a welcome pomp and grandiosity that contrasts to the dead weight we often get from similarly slow performances, while the third transpires on a grand scale in the manner of an orchestral piece transcribed for piano duet. Here I especially like the elegant transitions between sections by way of the pianists' slightly elongated up-beats.

By contrast, the closing *Deutscher* are all about Viennese charm and affection, and Vermeulen and Peeters lovingly demonstrate how to float Schubert's disarming lyricism in seven blissful minutes. Vermeulen's informative and well-written booklet-notes add value to a most desirable first instalment that augurs well for this cycle's subsequent volumes.

Jed Distler

Scriabin

Complete Mazurkas. Etudes, Op 8 – No 11; No 12

François Chaplin *pf*

Evidence © EVCD006 (80' • DDD)



Scriabin's 21 mazurkas are a loving and audacious tribute to Chopin. Audacious because, with the exception of Szymanowski (his 20 mazurkas), other

composers were intimidated by Chopin's 58 examples of a deeply ethnic genre.

In keeping with Chopin, many of Scriabin's mazurkas shift kaleidoscopically from joy to melancholy; and if the later numbers become increasingly neurotic and obsessive, they still recall their Polish ancestry, never more so than in their many surprise endings. No 2 amusingly looks ahead to the popular song 'Love is the sweetest thing', while No 10 comes close to the violent outcries that punctuate Hindemith's 'Boston' from his suite *1922* – strange prophecies indeed. And always, even in the earlier, more derivative mazurkas, there is that 'reining restlessness' so typical of Scriabin and, again in No 10, the fade-out into a disconsolate mist is wholly typical.

François Chaplin's playing is warmly affectionate; and, if he is less improvisatory or recreative than Samuel Feinberg in his recent set, he more than compensates for fine but long-deleted discs by Artur Pizarro and Gordon Fergus-Thompson. For encores he adds two early Etudes – Op 8 Nos 11 and 12 – and he is well recorded.

Bryce Morrison

Turina

'Piano Music, Vol 10'

Toccata and Fugue, Op 50. Partita, Op 57. Pieza romántica, Op 64. El castillo de Almodóvar, Op 65. Rincones de Sanlúcar, Op 78. Preludes, Op 80

Jordi Masó *pf*

Naxos Spanish Classics © 8 573183 (64' • DDD)



Volume 10 continues Jordi Masó's pilgrimage through Turina's complete

piano music. Less easily exportable than Falla, Albéniz, Granados or the ever-enchanting Mompou, Turina remains dear to Spain. True, there are times when his music outstays its welcome, succumbs to abrupt rather than convincing conclusions and indulges in too many family likenesses. And yet, for those who, like myself, are addicted to the Spanish idiom, there is so much to enjoy.

Reworking in his mature years Classical rather than Romantic forms (toccata, fugue, partita, prelude and gigue), Turina has little time for austerity, quickly elaborating his ideas into rich and inventive tapestries. In more picturesque territory, he looks back to early evocations; and *El castillo de Almodóvar* (illustrated on the front of Naxos's sleeve), where 'airy, Moorish-nuanced melodies' are magically

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deployed, produces in 'Silueta nocturna' one of the composer's finest creations. 'Introducción y Giga' (from the Partita) contrasts grandeur with high jinks, and 'La señorita María' (from *Rincones de Sanlúcar*) is a substantial lady, proudly dressed in Spanish finery. The final Op 80 Prelude brings this fascinating programme to a joyous end, and once again Masó, admirably recorded, takes everything in his stride, responding effortlessly to every virtuoso and entrenched national challenge.

Bryce Morrison

Whitlock

Fantasia Choral No 1^a. Organ Sonata^a - Canzona; Scherzetto. March for the Phoebe^b. Five Short Pieces^b - Allegretto; Paean. Prelude, Air and Fugue - Air^b. Plymouth Suite^b. Wessex Suite - March, 'Rustic Cavalry'^c

Robert Gower *orgs*

The Percy Whitlock Trust © PWTCDO0141 (70' • ADD)

Broadcast performances, played on the organs of

^aSt Stephen's Church, Bournemouth, 1982; ^cBoston Parish Church, 1988; ^bRochester Cathedral, 1996



Remember recording music from radio broadcasts on to tape cassettes? Here is the

digital (and legal) equivalent. It is culled from three separate BBC Radio 3 recitals and issued in association with the network in a limited edition to raise funds for The Percy Whitlock Trust. The producers have even kept the continuity announcements, their formal RP delivery a joy to hear in themselves and quite adequate substitutes for any booklet-notes. Robert Gower, Whitlock's pre-eminent champion and Chairman of the Trust, plays three different instruments: the organs of St Stephen's, Bournemouth, where Whitlock was organist from 1930 to 1935 (recorded in 1982); Rochester Cathedral, where Whitlock was a chorister from the age of 10, graduating to assistant organist in 1922 (recorded in 1996); and Boston Parish Church (recorded 1988).

Whitlock's unmistakably English music, a mix of the sacred and secular, is at its best when it's not overtly 'churchy' or formal. The rather cloudy acoustic of St Stephen's doesn't help the meandering *Fantasia Choral* No 1 or the two movements from the C minor Sonata, but with the buoyant *March for the Phoebe* (arranged by Gower from a score rescued from the municipal rubbish tip) you hear Whitlock at his most inimitable. The 'Paean' from *Five Short Pieces* is another superb recital piece,

followed by the Air (from *Prelude, Air and Fugue* arranged by our own Malcolm Riley, indefatigable Secretary of The Percy Whitlock Trust) and the (quint)essential *Plymouth Suite*, all benefiting from the Rochester instrument and acoustic. From Boston, another Gower arrangement, the spirited march 'Rustic Cavalry' from the *Wessex Suite*, concludes this enterprising disc – as valuable for its recording venues as for its authoritative, authentic performances. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'Couleur du temps'

Chopin Nocturnes - No 4, Op 15 No 1;

No 20, Op *posth.* Piano Concerto No 2, Op 21 - Larghetto. Prelude No 25, Op 45. Souvenir de paganini Debussy Suite bergamasque

Ravel Pavane pour une infante défunte

Szymanowski Nine Preludes, Op 1

Magdalena Zuk *pf*

Discovery Music & Vision © DMV111 (67' • DDD)



The young Polish pianist Magdalena Zuk here offers a beautifully balanced

sequence of pieces centring on nine by Szymanowski. Plainly she intends the sequence to underline the relationship between the three other composers, leading up to Szymanowski. What emerges in Zuk's playing of all these pieces is the wonderful singing quality of her *legato*, combined with a most natural-sounding control of *rubato*, often marked but never exaggerated.

Those are qualities to be cherished in all these pieces from Chopin onwards. The *Suite bergamasque* of Debussy brings finely controlled tonal contrasts with the ever-popular 'Clair de lune', third of the sequence, given the subtlest treatment imaginable, never rising above *pianissimo*. Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* then comes as a bit of a disappointment, nicely graded and transparent of texture, but one tends to miss the orchestral colouring.

The nine Szymanowski pieces then provide the main focus of the disc, and it would be hard to imagine them played more lovingly or more stylishly, with the links with Chopin evident throughout. It would be good now to hear Zuk in English piano music by Ireland or Bax. Trained in Paris and at the Royal College of Music in London, hers is plainly a talent to watch.

Edward Greenfield

'Enigma'

JS Bach Chromatic Fantasy, BWV903

(transcr Kodály) Hindemith Solo Viola Sonata,

Op 25 No 1 Kreisler Recitativo Scherzo

(transcr Kugel) Kugel Prélude-Ysaÿe.

Sonata-Poème Penderecki Cadenza

Stravinsky Elegy Vieuxtemps Capriccio,

'Hommage à Paganini', Op 55

Dana Zemtsov *va*

Channel Classics © CCSSA35714

(57' • DDD/DSD)



There are points in Dana Zemtsov's performance of Michael Kugel's

Sonata-Poème where her double-stopping is so perfectly tuned, so varied in colour and with such considerable distances in the intervals between the notes that you would be forgiven for thinking it sounded more like a chamber orchestra or, at least, a string quartet than simply a single viola playing more than one note at once. Kugel is himself a viola player (and Zemtsov's teacher), and it is notable in this fascinating and excitingly varied programme that the works in which he has had some hand all display tone colours, stretches and intervals that are unique and distinctly different to those associated with the violin. This includes his work on Kodály's transcription of the Bach *Chromatic Fantasy*, which the 22-year-old Zemtsov plays with extraordinarily mature musicality. Most importantly, though, her performance of Hindemith's Viola Sonata – one of the most important pieces in the instrument's solo repertoire – is as insightful and subtly nuanced as any of the best available examples in the catalogue (it is not without its flashes of bravery, either – most notably in one or two of her tempo choices).

'Enigma' is not a collection of the most jocular pieces – the viola isn't an inherently cheerful instrument – but there is no doubt that it leaves the listener with as much enjoyment of what they have just heard as a lack of understanding why the the viola is so overlooked as a solo instrument. At the very least, this disc is a compilation of hidden gems; at the very best, a snapshot of a great artist at the start of her career.

Caroline Gill

'Montage'

'Great Film Composers and the Piano'

Broughton Five Pieces D Davis Surface Tension

Desplat Trois Etudes - L'étreinte Giacchino

Composition 430 R Newman Family Album:

Homage to Alfred, Emil and Lionel Newman

J Williams Conversations

Gloria Cheng *pf*

Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7635 (71' • DDD)

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

- **Vänskä to finish his Sibelius**

With the 15-month lockout ended and Osmo Vänskä back on the letterhead, the **Minnesota Orchestra** will complete the Sibelius Symphony cycle it began taping for BIS over three years ago. The Third, Sixth and Seventh Symphonies will be recorded at the refurbished Orchestra Hall this year. The release date is yet to be confirmed.

- **Gardiner's B Minor Mass**

After the complete cantatas, the *St John Passion* and a weighty tome examining the life of their composer, **Sir John Eliot Gardiner** is set to record Bach's B Minor Mass with his Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists at LSO St Luke's. SDG will release the disc later this year.



- **Northern Nielsen**

When the BBC Philharmonic and **John Storgårds** (above) treat Mancunians to Carl Nielsen's six symphonies in the space of 10 days at The Bridgewater Hall in June, Chandos will be on hand to make studio recordings for release in a single box before the composer's anniversary year is out.

- **Beethoven goes home**

The **Vienna Academy Orchestra** and its conductor Martin Haselböck will perform and record Beethoven's nine symphonies this year in the very auditoria in which each work was first performed (if the buildings still exist). The first concerts take place in March and April, and the Alpha label will issue live recordings shortly thereafter.

- **Great violins on Divine Art**

Divine Art will record a number of discs featuring 'some of the most iconic historic violins in the world' in a new series curated by violinist **Peter Sheppard Skæved**. Two instalments have been recorded so far; the label will issue the first in May this year.



The six film composers represented on 'Montage' have between them amassed 72 Oscar nominations and eight wins. 'But,' ponders the booklet's introductory essay, 'what melodies, harmonies, what cadences haunt their private dreams?' Gloria Cheng wanted to find out. Having been presented in 2010 with a five-movement suite by Bruce Broughton (*Silverado*, *Young Sherlock Holmes*) and in 2012 with an encore piece by John Williams (*Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *ET*), Cheng then commissioned pieces from Don Davis (*The Matrix*, *Beauty and the Beast*), Michael Giacchino (*Up*, *Lost*, *Ratatouille*) and Randy Newman (*Monsters, Inc.*, *Toy Story 3*); Alexandre Desplat (*The Queen*, *The King's Speech*, *Argo*) offered his 'L'étreinte' ('The Embrace'), premiered by Lang Lang in 2012.

Miss Cheng, apart from having a very good address book, has one of those brilliantly efficient, emotionally unengaged techniques that make light work of the most daunting notation; but she can also conjure up alluring colours and half-tones. She certainly has her work cut out in Broughton's Five Pieces which, to give a flavour in shorthand, veer between Prokofiev, Kapustin and Ravel. I imagine other pianists will want to get their hands on these and Williams's *Conversations* (to his encore he added three further movements in 2013), both meaty works completely divorced from any Hollywood association. Davis's *Surface Tension*, the longest single piece here (11'32") explores, he tells us, 'the tension created by the juxtaposition of sound/time surfaces as expressed by the metaphor of a well-integrated visual object in which curvature changes systematically'. No, I don't either. The beguiling lyricism of the Giacchino and Desplat works are more obviously cinematic in creating mood and atmosphere, while Randy Newman's *Family Album* pays tribute to his extraordinary family (over 500 film scores between them) in a sequence of five short period pastiches. To assemble this unique programme is an impressive achievement; to play it so convincingly well is no less remarkable.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Rubinstein Remembered'

A film by Peter Rosen

RCA Red Seal © DVD 88843 01326-9

(58' • NTSC • 4:3 • DD2.0 • 0)

From 82876 58243-9 (6/04)



'Rubinstein Remembered' was originally broadcast in 1987 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the pianist's birth. It made its first appearance on DVD in 2004 issued with a bonus audio CD. A decade on and it's just the DVD.

When the film was made, Rubinstein had been dead for only five years. The backbone of the documentary is a visit to his birthplace of Łódź, Poland, for a centenary concert conducted by Rubinstein's actor-composer son John, who also narrates (in and out of vision) Peter Rosen's documentary. With many a still and archive film clip we are taken on a chronological journey though one of the longest public careers of any musician: Rubinstein made his public debut at the age of seven in 1894 and gave his final recital (at the Wigmore Hall in London when he was almost completely blind) in 1976.

For those not old or fortunate enough to have heard him in concert, it is difficult to convey his status in the musical world and the near-global affection in which he was held. The film illustrates all this vividly – the *bon vivant*, raconteur, cigar-smoking, exuberant lover of life – and reminds us of the strong moral stance he took on many issues such as returning an Italian decoration to Mussolini with a note of disgust. Rubinstein remembered here is an urbane, amiable musical genius. What the film does not do is tell the other side of the story. When I interviewed John Rubinstein back in 2000, he told me: '[My father] needed an enormous amount of attention and love. And that was extremely demanding and sometimes he went overboard. He had a terrible temper. He would turn on a dime and accuse his family members of being traitors.'

With his family so much involved with the making of the film and providing visual material (home movies, private photographs, etc) there is, understandably, no mention of this darker side, his vanity and insecurity, his many affairs, his somewhat dysfunctional family life, or of the woman 60 years his junior for whom he left his wife of 45 years at the age of 90 (it is Mrs Rubinstein who is in Łódź for the centenary concert). Visually, the black-and-white footage is crisper than the soggy 1987 colour. Valuable as Rosen's film is as an innocent and innocuous introduction to one of the greatest pianists in history, on both levels it now looks dated.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Sonatenabend'

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 32, Op 111.

Bagatelles, Op 119. Andante favori, WoO57

Berg Piano Sonata, Op 1

Mozart Piano Sonata No 8, K310

Mikhail Shilyaev *pf*

Stone Records © 5060192 780482 (73' • DDD)



The pianist tells us in his introductory note that he has performed this

programme many times in concert, 'built around three composers from Vienna'. Even allowing all three to be *echt Wienerisch*, the juxtaposition of Op 111 followed by the Berg Sonata followed by K310 is an uncomfortable one for my taste, rounded off rather strangely with a sequence of 11 Beethoven miniatures.

Mikhail Shilyaev (b1979, Izhevsk, Russia, now resident in London) is a name new to me and, though the booklet has no biography, his website boasts a string of competition wins, the most recent being the Bronze Medal at the 2010 Vienna da Motta International Piano Competition. I cannot, frankly, hear a strong musical personality here, rather a technically accomplished pianist of taste and sensibility. The clarity of his voicing and adroit phrasing in the Beethoven and Mozart sonatas are exemplary but rival recordings are many and Shilyaev cannot compete with the likes of Gulda (back in 1953) or Kempff (from 1964) in Op 111, nor Lipatti in K310 (given here, incidentally, without the first-movement repeat), all three of whom are on another level.

Shilyaev is hampered, too, by the small acoustic of London's Master Chord Studio, especially noticeable in the Berg Sonata, which needs the full singing dynamic range of the piano to be successful (compare this with Karim Said's urgent, passionate account, 03/15). The Op 119 Bagatelles are neatly, charmingly done (though there's surely more fun to be had from Nos 3 and 5) before the *Andante favori*, listed as a 'bonus track', ends this modest *carte de visite*.

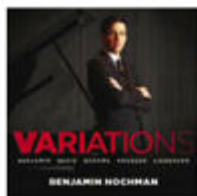
Jeremy Nicholas

'Variations'

G Benjamin Meditation on Haydn's Name **Berio** Cinque Variazioni **Brahms** Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op 24 **Knussen** Variations, Op 24 **Liebertson** Piano Variations **Benjamin Hochman** *pf* Avie © AV2327 (59' • DDD)



Solid command: Benjamin Hochman's polished fingerwork characterise his debut solo recording



As with his Avie solo debut disc (1/14), Benjamin Hochman's all-variations follow-

up release juxtaposes old and new works. Or rather 'new-ish' works, since Peter Liebertson's 1996 *Piano Variations* is the most recent offering, albeit in its world premiere recording. The piano-writing alternates between thorny and transparent textures, packed with repeated notes and chords that often suggest harmonically upgraded Scriabin. Rapid *tremolos* and quicksilver high-register single-line melodies abound. The music shifts moods on a dime and demands supple, split-second technical flexibility, which Hochman provides in spades.

The pianist's confident and polished fingerwork makes a compelling case for Oliver Knussen's absorbing and carefully crafted *Variations*, although I prefer Peter Serkin's premiere recording (RCA) for its sharper accents, wider dynamic range and more characterful contrasts. Hochman's solid command of the virtuoso outbursts and hushed delicate passages in Berio's *Variazioni* splits the difference between

Vanessa Wagner's broader, interpretation (Ambrosie) and the lighter, more airborne pianism that Andrea Lucchesini serves up on his recording (also on Avie). George Benjamin's 1982 *Meditation on Haydn's Name* remains a miniature masterpiece of pinpoint timing and harmonic ingenuity. If Hochman doesn't quite match the whimsical touch distinguishing the composer/pianist's Nimbus recording, his sensitive and nuanced playing still satisfies.

For the most part Hochman's small-scale, studio-bound Brahms *Handel* Variations suggests little of the music's grand design, dynamic heft, rhythmic drive and cumulative power, especially when measured against Perahia, Arrau, Ax, Ohlsson, Graffman, Flesher and Katchen. Just a few examples bear this out: the lumpish and decidedly less-than-*allegro* Var 10, plus the heavy-handed Nos 16 and 17. Yet Hochman plays the pants out of the Fugue, helped by a headlong tempo and bracing contrapuntal clarity. Excellent sound and annotations. **Jed Distler**

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Hugh Wood

A composer who values intellectual and formal rigour is a role model for composers of our time, argues **Richard Whitehouse**

Although it has long been fashionable (because convenient) to segregate composers into those who have made a discernible break with the musical past and those who have embraced it without hesitation, those who have drawn on it – directly yet never slavishly – as a means of evolving their own language have proved the most durable and also satisfying over time. One such is Hugh Wood, who, if he has never enjoyed the attention afforded to several of his British contemporaries, has produced as potent and distinctive an output as any from his generation.

Born into a musical family at Parbold in Lancashire on June 27, 1932, Wood read modern history at New College, Oxford, and only subsequently began serious musical studies. He had early encouragement from Alan Bush and Joseph Horowitz, while he credits Anthony Milner and Mátyás Seiber (with whom he studied briefly before the latter's untimely death in 1960) for instilling the rigorous technical and methodical approach which have long characterised his own music. Himself an inspiring if exacting teacher, Wood taught music at Morley College (1958-67) and the Royal Academy of Music (1962-5); then at the universities of Glasgow (1966-70), Liverpool (1971-5) and Leeds (1975-6) before taking up a senior post at Churchill College, Cambridge (1977-99). Alongside his pedagogical activities, he has broadcast regularly for the BBC besides writing a large number of articles and programme notes – all the

'This is among the finest symphonies from the later 20th century and the sure highlight of the composer's discography'

while evincing a formidable knowledge and wealth of insight into composers ranging from Bach to Gerhard. Numerous of these articles have now been anthologised in *Staking Out the Territory* (6/08).

Central to Wood's output (which is not vast but contains no redundant works) are his string quartets. The Quartet in B flat (1958) was among his first public successes when given at the Cheltenham Festival and has been revived this past decade, though his 'official' First Quartet (1962) marked a definite advance in its tonal astringency and personal take on the archetypal four-movement design. Both its successors are in one movement – the Second Quartet (1970) is among his most radical in its fragmented yet highly cohesive format, then the Third Quartet (1978) favours a more gradual and cumulative unfolding of its main ideas towards a climactic epiphany. The Fourth Quartet (1993) marks a return to four movements, with emphasis very much on its inward slow movement and combative finale, while the Fifth Quartet (2001) is a deceptively lighter piece whose five movements



Hugh Wood: a self-styled 'unregenerate modernist'

go from activity to poise and on to renewed energy. The first four numbered quartets were recorded by the Chilingirian Quartet (on Conifer) and it is to be hoped this disc will find reissue with new recordings of the other two works.

The first two quartets can be heard in committed readings by the Dartington Quartet (on Lyrita), which disc also features two of his earlier song-cycles – *The Horses* (1967) after Ted Hughes, and *The Rider Victory* (1968) after Edwin Muir. Songs comprise the largest if most neglected portion of Wood's output, making him among the genre's leading modern practitioners in his discerning choice of texts and the acuity of his musical characterisation. Happily the balance has just been redressed with release of his several sets of songs after Robert Graves (on NMC).

Wood has otherwise been most prolific in the realms of chamber and orchestral music. While he has essayed no large scale sonata, the often fraught combination of solo strings with piano has occupied him right back to the Variations for Viola and Piano (1958) which was his first published work. There are trios centred on piano (1984), horn (1989) and clarinet (1997); also quintets featuring clarinet and horn (1967) and clarinet (2007). A wide-ranging selection of these chamber pieces (on Toccata Classics) confirms the vibrancy of his writing in the medium.

The first of Wood's orchestral works is also among his most individual. Given its premiere at the BBC Proms, and less a cantata than a dramatic scena, *Scenes from Comus* (1965) features extracts from the eponymous masque by John Milton for soprano and tenor; their evoking of the ominous and menacing character of the 'wild wood' and its inhabitants



PHOTOGRAPHY: JONAS CHRISTIAN PERSSON

afforded context of an increasing intensity by the orchestral 'commentaries' and interludes which draw out some of the composer's most virtuoso writing, prior to one of his most raptly inward conclusions.

Concertos otherwise feature most prominently among Wood's orchestral works. The Cello Concerto (1969) received immediate acclaim for the formal ingenuity of its extended sonata design and the thorough integration of its expressive contrasts into a charged and cumulative continuity. If the First Violin Concerto (1972) eschews such extremes of emotion, its greater all-round subtlety – denoted by an ethereal interplay of soloist and strings at the outset – and deft elision between its three movements (the finale incorporating a lengthy developmental cadenza) make it the more immediately approachable as well as appealing work. The Piano Concerto (1991) adopts a more outwardly conventional fast-slow-fast format, its evolution purposeful and trenchant as it draws elements derived from jazz and blues into its engaging and often exhilarating orbit. All three pieces have been recorded (the latter two by the soloists

WOOD FACTS

Born June 27, 1932, Parbold, Lancashire

Education studies modern history at New College, Oxford (1951-4); composition with William Lloyd Webber, Anthony Milner, Iain Hamilton and Mátyás Seiber (1954-7)

Career Teaches music at Morley College and Royal Academy of Music, London (1958-67); Teaches music at Churchill College, Cambridge (1977-99)

Key premieres Variations for Viola and Piano by Cecil Aronowitz and Margaret Kitchen in Cheltenham (July, 1959); *Scenes from Comus* by BBCSO and Norman Del Mar in London (August 2, 1965); Cello Concerto by Zara Nelsova with BBC SO and Sir Colin Davis in London (August 26, 1969); First Violin Concerto by Manoug Parikian with RLPO and Sir Charles Groves in Liverpool (September 19, 1972); Symphony by BBC SO and Gennady Rozhdestvensky in London (July 23, 1982); Piano Concerto by Joanna MacGregor with BBC SO and Sir Andrew Davis in London (September 10, 1991); Variations for Orchestra by BBC SO and Andrew Davis at Last Night of the Proms, London (September 12, 1998); Second Violin Concerto by Alexandra Wood with Milton Keynes City Orchestra and Sian Edwards, Milton Keynes (January 23, 2009)

Wood on composing 'The real struggle, the real search, goes on deep inside ourselves. Outwardly, our energies are best turned to the new – however we may choose to define it.'

who gave the premieres), but there is no recording yet of the Second Violin Concerto (2004) which again favours a Classical formal design then takes it in arresting and unexpected directions.

Wood's only full-length orchestral work without soloist is the Symphony that he completed in 1982 after an eight-year gestation and whose premiere at the Proms the next year brought one of his greatest successes. At around 40 minutes and scored for sizable forces, it tackles this most daunting of genres head on: its four movements (divided into two pairs of almost identical length) comprising a *Tempesta* whose violence is the more telling for its relative brevity, an *Elegia* whose measured eloquence takes on haunting undertones by dint of the quotations which inform its later stages, a *Scherzo* which twice erupts with febrile energy, then a Finale that channels this tension into the slow-burning momentum of a passacaglia whose 22 variations build gradually and cumulatively towards a peroration as eloquent as it is exultant. This is assuredly among the finest symphonies from the late 20th century, and while live performance has (almost inevitably) been rare, it found a loyal champion in Sir Andrew Davis whose recording on NMC is the sure highlight of the composer's discography.

That discography remains the poorer while such earlier works as the Chamber Concerto and *Song Cycle to Poems of Pablo Neruda*, along with more recent pieces such as the Variations for Orchestra, *Serenade and Elegy* for string quartet and strings, the Fifth String Quartet and Second Violin Concerto are unrecorded. Wood, meanwhile, remains active as a composer – continuing to refine his musical idiom that, with its basis firmly in the developing variation techniques of Brahms and Schoenberg, as well as the harmonic and textural innovations of Janáček and Messiaen, amply retains its potency at a time when such concern for all-round formal and expressive integration is by no means to be taken for granted. Young composers could hardly wish for a better present-day model, while those listeners who value substance over mere style should certainly become acquainted with Wood's varied and authoritative legacy – whose continued relevance to the music of the early 21st century cannot be doubted. **G**

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Three recordings to start an exploration of Wood's music



Symphony. Scenes from Comus

Geraldine McGreevy *sop* Daniel Norman *ten*
BBC Symphony Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis
NMC Ⓢ NMC D070 (12/01)

Wood's magnum opus together with the first and most innovative of his orchestral works.



Cello Concerto. First Violin Concerto

Manoug Parikian *vn* Moray Welsh *vc* Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / David Atherton
NMC Ancora Ⓢ NMC D082 (9/03)

Two very different pieces that helped consolidate Wood's reputation at the turn of the 1970s.



Chamber Music

London Archduke Trio

Toccata Classics Ⓢ TOCCO075 (7/10)

A representative selection of Wood's chamber output ranging over 47 years of his career.

Vocal



Guy Rickards on a new disc of vocal works by Kaija Saariaho:

'Four musings on love combine restraint and longing as well as unleashed passion'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 101



Alexandra Coghlan reviews the new recital from Nicholas Phan:

'Love turns to heartbreak in a disc whose dramatic arc renders Purcell's Evening Hymn cruelly poignant' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 107

Arnesen • Gjeilo • Kernis

'Magnificat'

Arnesen Magnificat^a Gjeilo Tundra^b.

Song of the Universal^c Kernis Musica celestis^d

^bElse Bonesrønning, ^aLise Granden Berg, ^cCecillie Ertzaas Overrein soprs ^aMaria Næss, ^{bc}Ola Gjeilo pf

^aMagne H Draagen org Nidaros Cathedral Girls' Choir; Trondheim Soloists / Anita Brevik

2L (F) (2) (CD) + (2) 2L106SABD (68' • DDD/DSD • DTS-HD MA 192kHz/24 bit 5.1, Auro-3D 96kHz/24 bit 9.1 & LPCM 192kHz/24 bit stereo)



Although this disc was recorded in the northernmost medieval cathedral in

the world (in Trondheim), there is nothing chilly about this warmly compassionate music, which positively glows with its soaring, beautifully arched melodic lines, sung by fresh female voices and accompanied by the dynamic playing of the Trondheim Soloists' strings. Pure Audio Blu-ray and Auro-3D encoding further enhance the sonic splendour of this recording, which was made in 2013-14 in Nidaros Cathedral.

Arnesen's setting of the *Magnificat* (commissioned in 2010 by the Nidaros Cathedral Girls' Choir) approaches the familiar text from Mary's viewpoint, emphasising her sense of wonderment, humility and devotion. The highly derivative idiom is thoroughly tonal, the tone luxurious and the work cast at a predominantly prayerful slow pace. The opening is especially haunting, with its unhurried and repetitive echoes of Pärt – before slipping towards Howard Goodall. Poulenc and Karl Jenkins spring to mind in the slow waltz treatment of the 'Ecce enim', which introduces the glorious voice of soprano Lise Granden Berg. The work's only fast music occurs, aptly, in the vigorous 'Fecit potentiam'. In the 'Misericordia' Arnesen outdoes even Messrs Chilcott and Rutter for sheer singability.

The strings glow in Aaron Jay Kernis's powerful *Musica celestis* and the disc is

completed by two pieces by the Norway-born but now American-resident Ola Gjeilo (*b*1978). *Tundra* is highly attractive, complete with its *Downton Abbey*-like piano-plus-strings figuration, as is his setting of words from Whitman's *Song of the Universal* – both performed with delicacy and assurance. While verging on the 'easy listening', this disc is full of richness and musical delight.

Malcolm Riley

Capuana • Rubino

Capuana Messa di defonti

Rubino Messa di morti

Namur Chamber Choir / Leonardo García Alarcón

Ricercar (F) RIC353 (63' • DDD)



Polyphonic Requiems composed and published in Italy in the 17th century

number in the hundreds, so it's small wonder that the discography has only scratched the surface. The two included on this recording were both published in Sicily: Capuana's in 1650 and Rubino's in 1653. They are well contrasted. Capuana's is the more concise and chordal, shunning all but the simplest forms of contrapuntal interplay. His use of dissonance, though simple, is judicious and genuinely affecting, his handling of metre nicely varied. In the 'Dies irae' his illustrations of the text are full of incident, the contrast between its sections well handled. Its flashes of drama carrying over into the fine Offertory. Rubino's setting has the more intricate polyphony (though in fact both settings mix the old church style with the newer concerto idiom very fluently); his 'Dies irae', however, is more perfunctory than Capuana's, the skipping rhythms of its refrain strangely glib.

The Namur Chamber Choir has been turning out focused, committed performances for many years and this is a welcome addition to its discography. The inclusion of a dulcian in the continuo does

wonders for the overall sound. At times I could have done with more fire in their collective belly in the Capuana (especially from the lower voices), and one or two of the solo turns in the verses of his 'Dies irae' seem tentative. But these minor quibbles don't apply in the Rubino, which is very well managed indeed, as well as being the finer of the two settings. Fabrice Fitch

Dvořák • Gounod

Dvořák Mass, B153 Gounod Requiem

Anne Bretschneider sop Christine Lichtenberg

contr Holger Marks ten George Witt bass

Berlin Radio Choir and Polyphonia Ensemble / Risto Joost

Carus (F) CARUS83 386 (72' • DDD)



The Berlin Radio Choir join together with members of the excellent Polyphonia

Ensemble in Risto Joost's moving but not extrovert performance of Dvořák's continually inspired and melodic Mass, which is spacious and full of dedicated feeling. Although written to be sung with organ alone, Dvořák later orchestrated the score in 1894, first for wind ensemble, later effectively reduced to a wind quintet, attractive in itself and supporting the voices very effectively. With first-class soloists (especially the radiant soprano Anne Bretschneider), after the relatively lyrical *Kyrie* and *Credo*, Joost builds considerable power at the climax of the *Sanctus*, while the *Benedictus* ends joyously, before the contrasting *Agnus Dei*, where the choir and soloists together, create a poignant climax at the close.

Gounod's Requiem, which made its debut on Good Friday 1894, is again full of melody, and opens with the organ, before the choir enters somberly but affectingly, with a lovely hushed *Introit* and *Kyrie*. An elaborate sequence of soloists is then joined by the choir, singing music which continually changes in character. It moves affectingly through the 'Dies irae',

the mellower 'Rex tremendae', the 'Ingemisco' and the 'Confutatis maledictus' until it reaches the dramatic moment of Judgement. The *Sanctus* bursts in briefly but exultantly; the *Benedictus* ends with the cry of 'Hosanna in excelsis' and is followed by the touching *Pie Jesu*, in which all four soloists participate tellingly but in which Anne Bretschneider's contribution stands out. The *Agnus Dei* and *Communio*, which Verdi praised, end the work seraphically, and complete a performance in which all four soloists and the choir are touchingly responsive to Gounod's setting. The recording is made in an almost perfect acoustic. **Ivan March**

Elgar

King Olaf, Op 30^a.

The Banner of St George, Op 33^b

^aEmily Birsan sop ^aBarry Banks ten ^aAlan Opie bar

Bergen Philharmonic Choir; Choir of Collegiūm

Mūsicūm; Edvard Grieg Choir; Bergen

Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis

Chandos ② ③ CHSA5149 (112' • DDD/DSD • T)



This recording of Elgar's *King Olaf* on Chandos comes no less than 28 years after the

first (conducted by Vernon Handley) on EMI. It is an unjustly neglected setting of words adapted (with the help of his friend Acland) from Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, in which 'The Musician' (in reality Longfellow's Norwegian friend and musician Ole Bull) recounts the tale of Olaf Trygvason, the Norwegian king, nationalist symbol and bringer (often forcefully) of Christianity to the Norse people. Here, under the experienced Elgarian hand of Sir Andrew Davis and the appropriate forces of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and three fine Norwegian choirs (with splendid diction and intonation), the sound quality is vibrant, clear and compelling, and does justice to the enthusiasm of Elgar's score. The recording also brings together the American soprano Emily Birsan, Barry Banks (well known for his Italian *bel canto* repertoire) and Alan Opie, who confirm the quasi-operatic nature of the material in their vivid performances.

'Early' though this work may be regarded, it contains much of what we know of the composer's first flush of maturity: majestic melodies, modal harmony with strong plagal inclinations, the prevalence of the march as a style-form and musical ideas shaped by brilliant orchestration and Wagnerian sequence.

The work lacks, perhaps, the greater fertility of *Caractacus* and *Gerontius* but it is nevertheless full of vivid, stage-like picturesqueness, enhanced by the crispness of Davis's stewardship. This is amply demonstrated in Banks's theatrical portrayal of 'King Olaf's Return', a vivid scena, the dramatic exchanges between Olaf and the resistant Ironbeard, robustly played by Opie, and the more Wagnerian love scene between Olaf and Gudrun. The contribution of the chorus, who can barely be faulted for their sense of ensemble and balance, has a persuasive vitality in its role as both narrator and *turba* (especially in 'The Wraith of Odin', 'Thyri', 'The Death of Olaf' and the well-known 'As torrents in summer' in the Epilogue), a quality which brings merit to the otherwise musically weaker *The Banner of St George*. For devotees of Elgar and of English choral music of the late Victorian era, this pulsating recording has all those emotional attributes that make the heart beat faster.

Jeremy Dibble

Selected comparison:

LPO, Handley (3/87[®]) (EMI) 565104-2

Fauré • Gounod

Fauré Requiem, Op 48 Gounod Ave verum.

Les sept paroles de Notre Seigneur

Jésus-Christ sur la Croix

Flemish Radio Choir; Brussels

Philharmonic Soloists / Hervé Niquet

Evil Penguin ② EPRC0015 (54' • DDD)



There is some peculiar Latin pronunciation to negotiate as well as disconcertingly brisk

tempi – for Hervé Niquet *In Paradisum* seems to conjure more an image of the fast lane of a terrestrial motorway than the timeless bliss of a celestial eternity – but, once past these obstacles, this is a most refreshing Fauré Requiem. I want to describe it as 'life-affirming', so fresh and vigorous is the singing of the Flemish Radio Choir, but that might strike a somewhat ironic note. Suffice it to say that, coupled with a recording of pleasing depth and spaciousness, and crisp, neat playing from the Brussels Philharmonic Soloists, this certainly fulfils part of its declared brief to be 'an aspiration towards happiness'.

The lavish booklet includes several photographs of the John Rutter edition of the Fauré but in fact Niquet has prepared his own performing version, amalgamating elements from both the 1888 and 1893 versions and, most notably, assigning the *Pie Jesu* to full chorus sopranos. That leaves

just one soloist, baritone Andrew Foster-Williams (whose dreadfully irrelevant biography is the one downside in an otherwise wonderfully informative booklet). With the *Libera me* he injects the only real note of tension into the work with appropriate gravitas but without sounding excessively operatic; although some pulsating horns do a pretty good job of that.

If Niquet's interpretation of the Fauré seems a trifle too individual to make this a must-have recording, a beautifully warm-hearted and deeply expressive account of Gounod's *Ave verum* and an intense performance of his austere polyphonic unaccompanied setting of *The Seven Words of Christ from the Cross* give real distinction to this first release in a projected five-part series of choral works associated with death. **Marc Rochester**

Hildegard of Bingen • Abelard • Johansen

'Vox Cosmica'

Abelard Sequentia: Planctus David

Hildegard of Bingen O tu suavissima virga.

Karitas habundat. Ave Maria. O quam mirabilis.

O virtus sapientie Johansen Four Meditations

Hirundo Maris

Carpe Diem ② CD16304 (78' • DDD • T/t)



Hildegard of Bingen is now firmly enough established that she has almost achieved

the Bach-like status according to which it is generally believed that her genius remains however you perform the music: she is an entirely distinctive figure, musically bold and with an astonishing ability to modulate and vary her melodic patterns. And Arianna Savall is also firmly enough established as a singer that you can expect whatever she does to be convincing. But some listeners may find that her latest issue tests the boundaries. She sings five of Hildegard's works very slowly, accompanied by a range of instruments – from Norway a hardanger fiddle and a nyckelharpa, a santur from Persia, a Tibetan singing bowl, what sounds like a tromba marina played as an open-string drone, and various reconstructions of medieval instruments. In between there are four compositions (*Meditations*) in a related style by Petter Udland Johansen. And the longest track is the 16 minutes of Johansen singing Abelard's *Planctus David* with Savall's harp accompaniment.

This creates a kind of New Age atmosphere, soothing, devotional and

absolutely sincere. Oddly, the texts and the musical form come through most strongly in the online 'free' bonus track, for which you need to subscribe to the label's newsletter; otherwise they tend to get buried in the surrounding colour. But the sounds are all so gorgeous that it no longer seems to matter. The instrumental playing is flawless. **David Fallows**

Hölszky

Gemälde eines Erschlagenen^a. On the Other Side^b. Dämonen^c. Formicarium^d. Jagt die Wölfe zurück^e

^bMichael Riessler *cl* ^bHoward Levy *harm*

^bJean-Louis Matinier *acco* ^ePercusemble Berlin /

Edgar Gugges; Bavarian Radio Symphony

acd Chorus and *bc* Orchestra / ^cMartyn Brabbins,

^dFlorian Helgath, ^aGustaf Sjökvist, ^bLucas Vis

NEOS © NEOS11219 (68' • DDD)

Recorded live, 2002-10



Adriana Hölszky, born in Bucharest in 1953, was a pupil of Ștefan Niculescu, the

Romanian composer renowned for strips of melody that he completely immersed inside mirror images of themselves, and the surround-sound physicality of the teacher has clearly rubbed off on the pupil. Hölszky's choral piece *Gemälde eines Erschlagenen* (1993) is a setting of a poem by the Romantic poet Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz. An ill-fated individual is murdered in a forest and we're plunged into his unfolding crisis – cries, screams and whispers finding harmonic voice. The forest, in German Romantic mythology, indeed resonates as a dark place.

Hölszky is a favourite composer at the Musica Viva seasons of concerts and these five pieces were recorded live in Munich between 2002 and 2010; the recordings are unapologetically live and the vivid performances suggest that musicians relish responding to Hölszky's big asks. *Dämonen* (2006) for chorus and orchestra extends the foreboding menace of *Gemälde eines Erschlagenen* with a backhanded homage to the Mozart Year. Visions of a saccharine, cartoon Mozart are forgotten as, instead, we find ourselves inside Don Giovanni's head as he descends into hell – which is no pleasant or melodious place to be. Language crumbles, figuratively and literally. Text has been rubbed away, with guttural animalistic snarls and lusty breathing gradually shutting the body down.

Jagt die Wölfe zurück for percussion ensemble (1989-90) and *Formicarium* for voices (2010) aim to blanket us in sound

but *On the Other Side* for clarinet, harmonica, accordion and orchestra (2002) plays a subtler game. I hear it as an anti-concerto grosso, the Baroque archetype upended as the three soloists operate as a hybrid instrument playing music that challenges the orchestra to accommodate frangible, hairline graduations of texture.

Philip Clark

Liszt

'The Complete Songs, Vol 3'

Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzagen (fourth version), S311. Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam (second setting), S309. Die Fischerstochter, S325. Gastibelza (Bolero), S286. Go not, happy day, S335. Morgens steh ich auf und frage (third version), S290. La tombe et la rose, S285. Tre Sonetti di Petrarca (second version), S270. Und wir dachten der Toten, S338. Die Vätergruft (second version), S281. Le vieux vagabond, S304. Weimars Toten, S303. Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass (second setting), S297

Gerald Finley *bar* Julius Drake *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67956 (71' • DDD • T/t)



If Liszt was not the greatest of 19th-century song-writers, he was

arguably the most exploratory and eclectic. Spanning five decades and four languages, the songs on this disc range from the *bel canto*-inspired lyricism of the Petrarch sonnets – heard here in their more restrained revised versions – via the orchestrally conceived 'Weimars Toten' and the colourful Victor Hugo bolero 'Gastibelza', to the mingled bareness and harmonic audacity of his late songs. The funereal 'Und wir dachten der Toten', commemorating a fallen hero in the Franco-Prussian War, and the laconic Tennyson setting 'Go not, happy day' (Liszt's sole song in English) are typical of the ascetic yet strangely haunting sound world cultivated by the ageing Abbé, as if in atonement for the flamboyant excesses of youth.

The ever-rewarding song partnership of Gerald Finley and Julius Drake are persuasive advocates across the whole spectrum of Lisztian styles. Where theatrical panache is a *sine qua non* – in the swaggering 'Gastibelza' or the melodramatic ballad 'Die Fischerstochter' – the pair provide it in spades. Finley's darkly mellow, scrupulously produced baritone has the reserves of power to make something noble of the potentially bombastic 'Weimars Toten', while here and elsewhere Drake is a vivid colourist.

Always specific in his responses to verbal sonority and meaning, Finley graphically captures the shades of irony and bitterness in another ballad, 'Le vieux vagabond', encompassing with ease its huge vocal range, down to a resonant low E. His mellifluous *legato*, ardent phrasing and ringing top notes are well displayed in the soaring Italianate lines of the Petrarch sonnets. Drawing on the bass resonances within his baritone, Finley brings a baleful authority to the half-crazed old Harper's song 'Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass', whose obfuscating chromaticism sounds even stranger than Wolf's setting of 30 years later; and singer and pianist sensitively catch the mix of confiding intimacy and austerity in three epigrammatic settings of Heine, the composer's one-time friend who coined the term Lisztomania. Except in the Petrarch songs, Liszt rarely seduces you with ravishing melody. But, as Finley and Drake eloquently demonstrate (a word, too, for Susan Youens's absorbing booklet-notes), his songs are never less than fascinating, harmonically, pianistically and in their often original approach to word-setting.

Richard Wigmore

Penderecki

A Sea of Dreams did Breathe on Me

Izabela Matula *sop* Agnieszka Rehlis *mez*

Leszek Skrla *bar* Podlasie Philharmonic

Choir and Orchestra / Wojciech Rajski

Dux © DUX0963 (52' • DDD)



While this colourful orchestral song-cycle from 2010 has in many ways a close relative in

the Symphony No 8, *Songs of Transience*, it nevertheless reveals new facets of the composer. Penderecki is here, I think, intentionally placing himself squarely in the line of Moniuszko, Szymanowski and the late-Romantic Russian song composers.

The texts are all by Polish poets, most of them contemporary, and the most serious criticism I have to make of this disc is that neither the original Polish nor a translation is provided. That aside, much of the music is quite magical, and the performances are gripping. While the first three songs, in which the soprano's nightingale roulades take us back to Szymanowski and in which Penderecki reminds us what a delicate orchestrator he can be, the entry of the choir in the fourth, 'Autumn red-hued forests' is quite unexpected and hugely effective. The baritone soloist has already come in by that point and takes over for the



The Namur Chamber Choir, who now turn their reputable focus and commitment in the direction of music from Sicily (review on page 96)

fifth song, 'Emptiness. A lonely tree', which is determinedly Russian in character. With 'Angelus', the final song of the first part, all three soloists come together, and here the Russianness moves towards Rachmaninov, complete with bell effects.

The second part continues to be Russian-flavoured; but with the very brief 10th song, which gives its title to the whole work, to a poem by Tadeusz Micinski, we are in Szymanowski's fairy-tale land once more. Russia returns, however, in Part 3, a Requiem for Chopin, and even Shostakovich is recalled in the 15th song, 'The autumn wind roared'. The final song is a kind of miniature scena and an appropriately dramatic and enigmatic end to this thought-provoking work. The performances are outstanding – Leszek Skrla's rich baritone impresses particularly – and they are beautifully recorded.

Ivan Moody

Rossini

Petite Messe solennelle^a.

O salutaris de campagne^b

^aSandra Pastrana sop ^{ab}Gabriella Sborgi contr

^aDavide Giusti ten ^aCarlo Lepore bass ^{ab}Filippo

Farinella, ^aSabina Belei pfs ^aRiccardo Bonci harm

^aNew Chamber Singers / Andrea Cappelleri

Brilliant © 2 94459 (95' • DDD • T/t)



The New Chamber Singers is a choir of mostly English-speaking singers based

in Rome. There are some two dozen voices here, double the number originally prescribed by Rossini, though well suited to a performance which presents the work in colours which bespeak an older, earthier form of Catholicism. The singing is robust and workmanlike: witness the choir's realisation of the 'Cum Sancto Spiritu', which has exactly the right degree of trenchancy and joy.

Made in a church in Assisi, the recording put me in mind of Henry James's description of Assisi's great basilica: 'The tone of the place is a triumph of mystery, the richest harmony of lurking shadows and dusky corners, all relieved by scattered images and scintillations.' The recording offers a full-bodied, somewhat crepuscular sound picture in which the soloists are placed unapologetically to the fore while the choir and a pair of powerfully played pianos sit comfortably in the acoustic's middle distance.

Nothing is done by halves. The women's 'Qui tollis' is a soaring act of public penitence, the 'Quoniam' a thunderous affirmation of Christ's majesty, in which the tones of bass Carlo Lepore are as black as the pit of Acheron. The tenor's 'Domine Deus' similarly struts its stuff in a style the young Verdi might have approved.

There is also an unusually striking account of the work's instrumental interlude, the 'Prélude religieux'. Riccardo Bonci plays this on an 1897 instrument by the great French harmonium maker Victor Mustel in an arrangement by the composer and harmonium aficionado Sigfrid Karg-Elert. Rossini, who was fascinated by organs and harmoniums (he played no small part in the launch of Cavaillé-Coll's career), would have listened with interest.

All of which is some way from the more courtly world of the private chapel of the Parisian town house for which the work was originally conceived. It is this which the 12-voice Kirchheim Vocal Consort so skilfully evoke in a recent Carus recording. What the Carus performance lacks in heft, it more than makes up for in style.

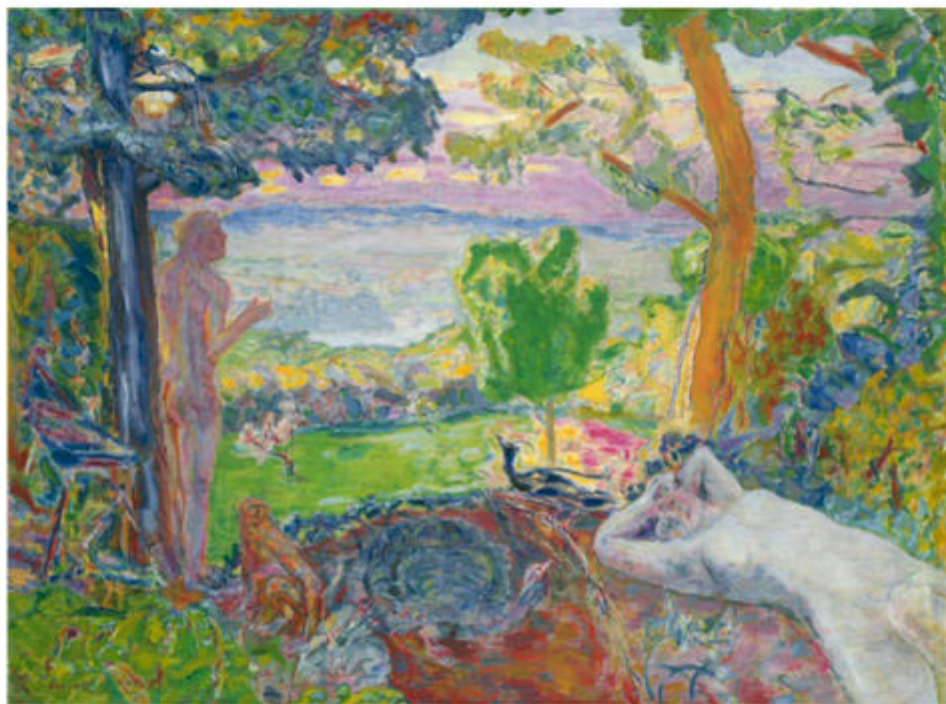
The addendum to the new disc is the first solo version of the Eucharistic prayer *O salutaris hostia*. Rossini originally set this as an *a cappella* vocal quartet before

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ESA-PEKKA SALONEN



STÉPHANE DEGOUT



CHLOÉ BRIOT



CHRISTINE RICE



ERIC OWENS

“Exquisite soundscapes... spellbinding”

—Review of Salonen’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*,
The Guardian, November 2014

MAY 7–9 and 15

RAVEL

L’enfant et les sortilèges

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Chloé Briot *soprano (Child)*

Chicago Symphony Chorus

Duain Wolfe *chorus director*

RAVEL *Mother Goose Suite*

DEBUSSY *La damoiselle élue*

RAVEL *L’enfant et les sortilèges*

MAY 14, 16 and 19

DEBUSSY

Pelléas et Mélisande

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Stéphane Degout *baritone (Pelléas)*

Christine Rice *mezzo-soprano*

(*Mélisande*)

Eric Owens *bass-baritone (Golaud)*

Willard White *bass-baritone (Arkel)*

Felicity Palmer *mezzo-soprano*

(*Geneviève*)

Chloé Briot *soprano (Yniold)*

MAY 21–23

MESSIAEN

Turangalila-symphonie

Esa-Pekka Salonen *conductor*

Valérie Hartmann-Clavene

ondes martenot

Jean-Yves Thibaudet *piano*

DEBUSSY *Syrinx*

RAVEL *Piano Concerto in G Major*

MESSIAEN *Turangalila-symphonie*



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transcribing it for mezzo-soprano (*Péché de vieillesse*, ix, No 5). The prayer was later recast for the *Messe* as a limpid soprano air in G, the better to offset the mezzo's great concluding E minor/E major *Agnus Dei*.

Richard Osborne

Petite Messe solennelle – selected comparison:

Kirchheim Voc Consort, Kaljuste

(A/14) (CARU) CARUS83 406

F Rung • H Rung • Lange-Müller

Lange-Müller In memoriam **F Rung** Flyv ud mine unge Sange. Sangen. Jeg vier min Sang til din Vår. Sonntagsstille. Die Musik. Fuglevis. I Skoven. Gammelt Minde. Erindring **H Rung** Gurre (Hvor Nilen vander Ægyterens Jord). Kong Valdemar jager udi Gurre. Det Svundne og det Vundne. Solnedgang. Længsel. Jomfru, du må ikke sove. Månenkinsdrømme. Vintervisite. Vexelsang af 'Brand'. Stevnemødet. Barcarole **Erik Bekker Hansen** ten **Ellen Refstrup** pf with **Trine Bastrup Møller** sop **Thomas Christian Sigh** bar Danacord © DACOCD751 (61) • DDD • T/t



'Rung & Rung' proclaims the cover of this Danacord issue, boldly if enigmatically.

I confess I had never previously heard of the two Danish composers, Henrik and Frederik Rung, father and son, but this delightful disc certainly establishes their claims as consummate artists, both of them writing songs and duets of great charm.

Needless to say, their writing is largely derivative in style, obviously influenced by Beethoven as well as Schubert, while Frederik is influenced more by Brahms, with an occasional reference to those older composers. The greater number of the items are performed by the stylish tenor Erik Bekker Hansen, with Ellen Refstrup accompanying him, as she does the two other singers, Trine Bastrup Møller (soprano) and Thomas Christian Sigh (baritone). What a delight it is to find all four soloists with such firm and fresh voices and not a hint of a wobble among them.

Henrik Rung (1807-71) offers the 11 items on the first half of the disc, with two duets for tenor and baritone and three for tenor and soprano. In between comes a piano solo, *In memoriam*, written in 1914 on the death of Frederik Rung by Peter Erasmus Lange-Müller. Most of the songs are simply strophic with variants between stanzas but always lyrical in a warm, often folk-like way. It is to the credit of Erik Hansen that there is no lack of variety in his expression. It helps that full texts and English translations are included. Specially

attractive I find are 'Længsel' ('Longing'), with its implied questions and answers, as well as the duet with soprano setting words from Ibsen's *Brand*, the baritone in a jolly 6/8 and the soprano more staid in 4/4.

The formula is similar in the second half of the disc involving songs and duets by Frederik Rung (1854-1914), with a sequence of Brahmsian songs in the middle, one of them 'Sonntagsstille' ('Sunday Silence'), rather like Brahms's 'Lullaby'. I also love the jaunty song 'Fuglevis' ('A Bird Ballad'), rather like something from Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*. Good sound, though with the piano a little forward of the voices, letting one hear the often elaborate keyboard-writing. Altogether a splendid tribute to the Rungs, father and son. **Edward Greenfield**

Saariaho

Émilie Suite^a. Quatre Instants^a. Terra memoria

^aKaren Vourc'h sop **Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra** / Marko Letonja

Online © ODE1255-2 (71) • DDD • T/t



The major item on this excellent new Ondine release is the suite for soprano and

small orchestra (2011) from Kaija Saariaho's third opera, the monodrama *Émilie* (2008-09). About a third of the opera has been reworked into five vivid movements based on a single night towards the end of the curtailed life of the brilliant mathematician and scientist Émilie de Châtelet (1706-49). The delicate scoring, including a harpsichord for period feel (though no 18th-century player could ever have conceived of such harmonies), is beautifully expressive of her state of mind while in the later stages of pregnancy and working on translating Newton's *Principia* (title of the central movement), framed by forebodings of her death in the outer songs.

Saariaho's genius as a song-writer is displayed in ravishing form in the orchestral version of *Quatre Instants* (2002), as with *Émilie* to texts by Amin Maalouf. These four musings on love combine restraint and longing as well as unleashed passion, the closing 'Résonances' almost Janus-faced as it inwardly closes the emotional circle while outwardly ecstatic. Here, as in the *Émilie Suite*, Saariaho has found a near-ideal interpreter in Karen Vourc'h – who already has the full *Émilie* opera as well as the oratorio *La Passion de Simone* in her repertoire – whose radiant tone is enchanting.

I am not overly familiar with the Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra but they play with unusual fervour and refinement, relishing Saariaho's at times opulent sound world (even when deploying small instrumental groups). This is manifest also in their vibrant performance of the string-orchestral *Terra memoria*, Saariaho's 2009 arrangement of her second string quartet (2007). Ondine's recording, engineered by Arnaud Houpert and Dennis Fenninger, is superb. **Guy Rickards**

Schubert

Die schöne Müllerin, D795.

Wandrer's Nachtlied – I, D224; II, D786

Wolfgang Holzmair bar **Geoffrey Parsons** pf

Wigmore Hall Live © WHLIVE0072 (67) • DDD

Recorded live, November 4, 1994



Wolfgang Holzmair's 1999 recording of *Die schöne Müllerin* with Imogen Cooper

has long been admired for its freshness and expressive immediacy. Five years earlier at the Wigmore Hall, in what proved to be pianist Geoffrey Parsons's final public appearance, he 'lives' the cycle even more intensely, prepared to sacrifice vocal finish to the impulse of the moment. The early songs are all impetuous eagerness, rising to manic delirium in 'Am Feierabend' (where Holzmair lingers almost masochistically over the miller-maid's 'Allen eine gute Nacht') and 'Ungeduld'. Here and occasionally elsewhere, pitch and rhythm can blur under the pressure of emotion, with phrases delivered in a near-*Sprechgesang*.

Even the reflective songs have an urgent, restless undertow. If I craved a more rapt *legato* in 'Danksagung an den Bach' and 'Der Neugierige' – both of which tend to surge and billow – Holzmair's spontaneous ardour is fair compensation. He and the ever-sentient (if slightly too recessed) Parsons make the three long strophic songs at the cycle's centre urgent rather than dreamy, imaginatively varying the expression from verse to verse, and convey an ecstatic abandon in 'Mein', the miller's moment of imagined triumph in love. With the arrival of the macho huntsman, Holzmair graphically embodies the miller's mingled impotent fury and desolation. 'Eifersucht und Stolz' is especially vivid, from the sneering bitterness of 'mit langem Halse' (nice girls don't crane their necks to gawp at passing hunters), through the sudden pathos of 'doch sag ihr nicht', to the mounting despair beneath the feigned

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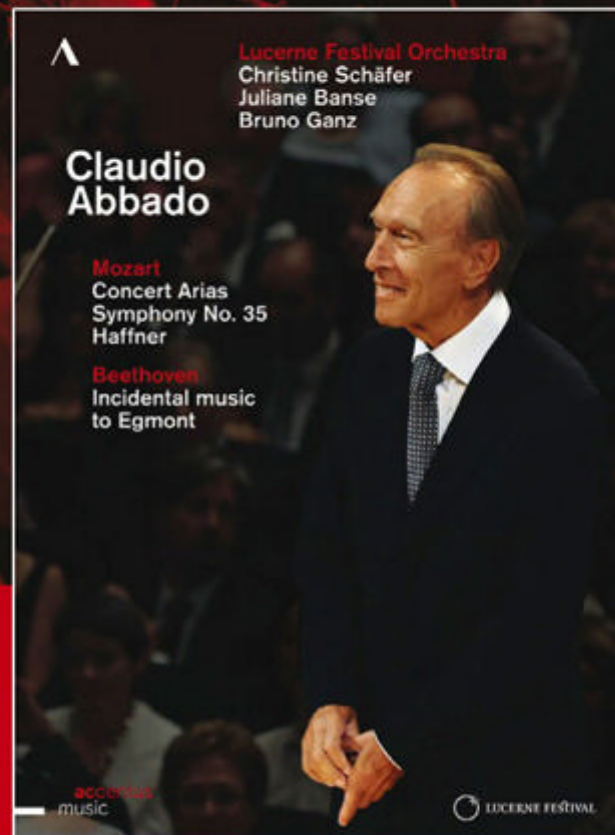
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insouciance of the last verse. Crucially, too, the two final songs have a sense of cathartic release, with Holzmair floating an unearthly *pianissimo* in the closing verse of 'Des Baches Wiegenlied'.

While this isn't the most scrupulously sung *Schöne Müllerin* on offer (the studio recording with Cooper is better in this respect), Holzmair's sympathetic, tenorish baritone and quicksilver response to mood and verbal nuance are never less than compelling. It joins the handful of favourite baritone versions listed below, its claims enhanced by Holzmair's wonderfully *innig* performances of Schubert's two 'Wandlers Nachtlieder' as encores.

Richard Wigmore

Selected comparisons:

Fischer-Dieskau, Moore (11/62th) (EMI) 085209-2

Holzmair, Cooper (7/99) (PHIL) 456 581-2PH

Goerne, Schneider (A/02) (DECC) 470 025-2DH

Gerhober, Huber (2/04) (ARTN) 82876 53172-2

Quasthoff, Zeyen (2/06) (DG) 474 218-2GH

Valls

Missa Scala Aretina. Lauda Ierusalem. Sancta et immaculata. En el misterioso circo. De lamentatione Ieremiae prophetae. Surrexit pastor bonus. Domine vim patior. Plorans ploravit. Ave Maria. Sombras cobardes

La Grande Chapelle / Albert Recasens

Lauda © LAU014 (75' • DDD)



Francesc Valls (c1671-1747) was an adoptive Catalan who spent most of his career as the chapel-master of Barcelona Cathedral. Today he is best known for theoretical works and his *Missa Scala Aretina* (1702), one of the last pieces to make overt reference to Guido of Arezzo's famous hexachord. An exceptionally informative booklet details the controversy surrounding it, ostensibly a matter of music theory but actually one of political allegiances. It's a beguiling mixture of old and new, full of incidence, with choir, soloists and parts for strings and trumpet (the latter perhaps added for a subsequent performances a few years later). It would be worth hearing on its own but one's appreciation is enhanced by Valls's other works on the disc, which are extremely varied. There's a wonderful concertato *Lauda Jerusalem* with daredevil clarino parts; a couple of chromatic pieces, entertaining if a touch overdone; a pair of penitential motets and an *Ave Maria*, all genuinely affecting; and a brace of villancicos, one of which prefigures the Mass's subject in its opening bars and is programmed just before it.

The surface of the music is immediately engaging but it grows in interest with repeated listening. The performances are on a level with the programming and the music (and, incidentally, the handsome presentation): as in their fine Piazza Navona disc a few years back, the sense of occasion is palpable. La Grande Chapelle's championing of Iberian polyphony has been winning them many admirers, and they've hit another bull's-eye here.

Fabrice Fitch

Wolf

'The Complete Songs, Vol 8 - Eichendorff Lieder' Gedichte von Joseph von Eichendorff.

In der Fremde - I; II (second setting); VI.

Die Kleine. Nachruf. Rückkehr

Katherine Broderick *sop* **Nicky Spence** *ten*

David Stout *bar* **Sholto Kynoch** *pf*

Stone Records © 5060192 780420 (62' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at St John the Evangelist, Iffley Road, Oxford, May 11, 2013



The latest volume in Stone Records' complete survey of Wolf's songs follows

the same pattern as previous releases: young singers are brought together with the excellent pianist Sholto Kynoch, founder of Oxford Lieder, under the auspices of which this live recording was made. The sound is clear and alive, the presentation exactly what one would want, with full texts and translations, plus a detailed essay from Richard Stokes that explores the composer's relationship with Eichendorff. The tracks are in sensible order, too, with Wolf's six 'unofficial' settings of the poet coming ahead of the 20 that featured in the published sets.

Kynoch's accompaniments are beautifully sensitive, flexible and transparent throughout, and all three singers engage intelligently with the texts. Katherine Broderick's performances, for example, often have an infectious twinkle in their eye – her 'Die Zigeunerin' has a wonderful, slightly unhinged quality to it – which largely makes up for the slightly acidic edge in her powerful soprano, and the fact that it can't manage a great deal of purity and steadiness high up. Pure, clean tenor tone doesn't feature much in Nicky Spence's singing but his vivid way with the poetry offers similar recompense. I have few complaints, by contrast, about David Stout's robust, resonant baritone, a pleasingly rich and chewy voice used with style; his contributions are the highlight of the disc.

These are all refreshing and unfailingly engaging performances, then, even if the competition from Hyperion, featuring Stephan Genz, Bernarda Fink and Roger Vignoles, probably remains the more complete recommendation. **Hugo Shirley**

Selected comparison:

Genz, Fink, Vignoles (7/98th) (HYPE) CDH55435

Concert Clemens

Arason Benedictus Byrd Mass for Four Voices -

Agnus Dei **Durufle** Quatre Motets sur des thèmes grégoriens, Op 1 **Gade** Morgensang af Elverskud **Geoffray** Triptyque Marial - Fille de

ton fils **Gesualdo** In Monto Oliveti

Gudmundsen-Holmgreen Förärsnat **Janequin**

Le chant des oiseaux **Jersild** Natteregn

Lewkovitch All Aurora **Mendelssohn** Denn er

hat seinen Engeln **Nielsen** Min Jesus, lad mit

hjerter få **Nystedt** Jesus, din sôte forening å

smake **Nystroem** Huru skön **Tavener** The Lamb

Concert Clemens / **Carsten Seyer-Hansen**

Danacord © DACOCD752 (52' • DDD)



This CD presents an assortment of favourite pieces from the repertoire of the

Danish choir Concert Clemens. The music comes from four different centuries – 16th, 17th, 19th and 20th – and most of the works use sacred texts. The programme looks somewhat incoherent on paper but the generally conservative choral writing of all the composers means that old and new compositions coexist with ease.

The uniformity of approach in Concert Clemens's performances also provides consistency in their interpretations. They sing with a 'straight' tone, free from any operatic vibrato, and their balance and blend are finely polished by conductor Carsten Seyer-Hansen. The seamless *legato* is helped by the gentle articulation of consonants, and dynamics are placed within a comfortable, unforced tonal spectrum.

Despite the attractiveness of the singing, the overall impression is of a slight coolness and lack of emotional involvement with the words. One possible reason for this is the restraint in the range of dynamics, where there's only a modest difference between *pp*, *mp* and *f*. This is apparent in Tavener's *The Lamb*, and here, the composer's instructions for flexibility of tempo, plus *marcato* phrase marks on important words are largely unobserved. Arguably, it's only in Janequin's *Le chant des oiseaux* that the choir display their full expressiveness; here, the crisp diction and the evident enjoyment of the singers is well captured by the faithful recording.

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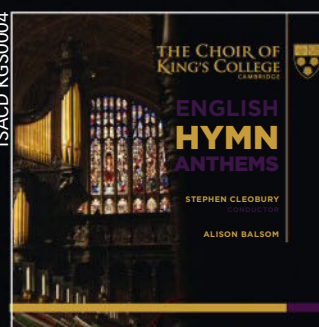
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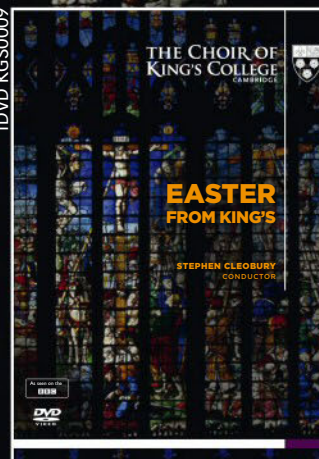
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Easter From King's

On DVD for the first time, the 2014 televised service, *Easter from King's*, as broadcast by the BBC.



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It may be that Concert Clemens are more satisfying to hear live, within the setting of a handsome church or cathedral. Certainly they're a choir worth listening to for their beautiful singing, which can deliver performances of pure, natural eloquence. **Christopher Nickol**

'Ascendit Deus'

Dean Was it a voice? **Elgar** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me **Finzi** God is gone up **Gowers** Viri Galilaei **Grieg** Pinsesalme **Harvey** Come, Holy Ghost **Martin** Messe – Credo **Muhly** Let all the world in every corner sing **Philips** Ascendit Deus **Ross** Ascendo ad Patrem meum **Stanford** Coelos ascendit hodie **Swayne** God is gone up **Vaughan Williams** O clap your hands **Weir** Ascending into heaven
Choir of Clare College, Cambridge;
The Dmitri Ensemble / Graham Ross
Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7623 (78' • DDD)



Three previous discs from the Choir of Clare College and Graham Ross have

covered Advent, Christmas and Passiontide respectively. This new offering is devoted to Ascensiontide, with three Pentecost items tucked in towards the end; six numbers are a *cappella*, two include a brass group, and the Muhly and Ross pieces feature a solo instrument.

Much of the disc is devoted to contemporary music but it opens with two classics. Peter Philips's *Ascendit Deus* is splendidly bright and vigorous, albeit a little relentless. It's followed by Vaughan Williams's *O clap your hands*, with brass and percussion as well as organ. Ross's orchestration of Patrick Gowers's *Viri Galilaei* is for the same forces. By a strange coincidence – or is it? – the first four notes on the trumpet echo the opening of the Vaughan Williams. A baritone recitative and a choral 'God is gone up' lead to a verse of Bishop Wordsworth's hymn, 'See the Conqueror mounts in triumph'. Two other pieces incorporate music from the past. Ross quotes the Tallis anthem *If ye love me*, to haunting effect, while Jonathan Harvey's *Come, Holy Ghost* is based on the plainchant hymn. And if the tenor and bass solo in Judith Weir's *Ascending into heaven* is not quite organum, it certainly has an antique sound.

The other modern works are equally memorable. Nico Muhly's *Let all the world*, quite unlike the RVW setting, is gentle, almost contemplative; Giles Swayne's *God is gone up* offers another surprise with its quiet ending. These and the well-known

Elgar and Finzi pieces are all beautifully performed by this accomplished choir. Let's hope an Easter disc is on its way.

Richard Lawrence

'Nocturnes'

Bax The White Peace **L Berkeley** Five Poems of WH Auden, Op 53 – No 4, Eyes look into the well; No 5, Carry her over the water. Silver, Op 26 No 5
L Boulanger Vous m'avez regardé avec toute votre âme **Brahms** Der Gang zum Liebchen, Op 48 No 1. Ständchen, Op 106 No 1 **Britten** Fish in the Unruffled Lakes – No 2, Night covers up the rigid land **Debussy** Nuit d'étoiles **Duparc** Sérénade florentine **Fauré** Clair de lune, Op 46 No 2. La lune blanche luit dans les bois, Op 61 No 3 **Finzi** A Young Man's Exhortation, Op 14 – No 5, The Comet at Yell'ham **Franck** Nocturne **Gurney** Sleep **Hahn** L'heure exquise **Liszt** Kling Leise, mein Lied, S301 **Mendelssohn** So schlaf in Ruh! **Schubert** An die Laute, D905. Der Jungling und der Tod, D545. Der Wanderer an den Mond, D870

Rupert Charlesworth *ten* **Edwige Herchenroder** *pf*
Zig-Zag Territoires © ZTZ355 (54' • DDD)



Performances at the Aix-en-Provence festival can sometimes stretch to the other

side of midnight. This programme began as a recital at Aix last year, finding its way on to disc as the first in a series of recordings co-produced by the festival and Zig-Zag Territoires devoted to the new generation of artists coming out of the festival's Académie for young performers. As befits a recital given under the Provençal night sky, Rupert Charlesworth offers a panorama of songs about night in its multifarious guises. They range from evocations of hallowed silence, such as Hahn's 'L'heure exquise' and Franck's 'Nocturne', to more ambiguous songs where the night covers dark deeds or desires, including a pair of Auden settings by Britten and Berkeley. German, French and English songs are mixed in a carefully judged balance.

Charlesworth comes to his varied programme with a basically youthful, slender tenor voice, which is attractively warm in the middle register, clear and luminous at the top. Gurney's 'Sleep' introduces mellow, subtly shadowy sounds. Brahms's 'Ständchen' and Liszt's 'Kling leise, mein Lied', a duo of German-language serenades, are sung with a persuasive variety of colours. In the French mélodies his keenness to sing the language clearly sometimes makes him sound prim, where one wants the words to come across more naturally. Debussy's 'Nuit d'étoiles',

though, is rather lovely. Edwige Herchenroder's accompaniments are well recorded and she makes the most of the nocturnal scene-painting, like the disappearing gleam in an empty sky that forms a postlude to Finzi's 'The Comet at Yell'ham'. A nice disc for late-night listening. **Richard Fairman**

'O Sacrum Convivium'

Langlais Messe solennelle **Messiaen** O sacrum convivium! **Poulenc** Quatre Motets pour un temps de pénitence. Quatre Petites Prières de Saint François d'Assise **Vierne** Messe solennelle, Op 16^a

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge /

Andrew Nethsingha with **Edward Picton-Turbervill** and ^a**Joseph Wicks** *org*
Chandos © CHAN10842 (64' • DDD)



The *Messes solennelles* by Langlais and Vierne are regular bedfellows on disc.

Here Andrew Nethsinga and the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, use them as a pair of Gothic bookends for a programme of 20th-century French sacred music that also includes Poulenc's *Quatre Petites Prières*, his *Quatre Motets pour un temps de pénitence* and Messiaen's exquisite miniature *O sacrum convivium!*. It's a clever juxtaposition – the stark textural concision of the unaccompanied motets set in relief by the excesses at either end, the shared modal language offering a crucial thread of continuity.

It's the motets that stand out here, particularly the *Petites Prières*, where the men of the choir put their woody blend to good use. Add the trebles and you lose that electric precision of tuning, but it's a small detail when considered in the context of the tonal control and dynamic long-game of the Messiaen – a single, ever-intensifying gesture, growing from hushed prayer to urgent shout. I'll admit to a default preference for sopranos over trebles but here – especially in the *Pénitence* motets – there's an extremity, a roughness that catches Poulenc's mood more vividly than any amount of adult technique.

The two Mass settings put organ scholar Edward Picton-Tubervill (aided by Joseph Wicks in the Vierne) in the spotlight in arrangements for a single organ. The result is assertive, bold even, but falls just short of the blood-and-thunder Vierne's writing in particular demands. The *Gloria*'s quasi-operatic drama lacks narrative impetus from the voices, though the more contemplative *Sanctus* and *Agnus* are more



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successful. The Langlais is altogether gutsier, balancing English choral elegance with a little more French abandon.

Alexandra Coghlan

'A Painted Tale'

Blow Fairest work of happy nature. The Self Banished. Of all the torments, all the cares. O turn not those fine eyes away **Dowland** My thoughts are winged with hopes. Can she excuse my wrongs?. In darkness let me dwell. Now, O now, I needs must part. Come heavy sleep **A Ferrabosco II** So, so leave off this last lamenting kiss **R Johnson** Have you seen but a bright lily grow **Lanier** Fire, Fire. No more shall meads be deck'd with flowers. Stay, silly heart **Morley** A Painted Tale **Purcell** O solitude, my sweetest choice, Z406. Pausanius, Z585 - Sweeter than Roses. She loves and she confesses too, Z413. Not all my torments, Z400. An Evening Hymn 'Now that the sun hath veiled his light', Z193

Nicholas Phan *ten* Michael Leopold *lute*

Ann Marie Morgan *va da gamba*

Avie © AV2325 (70' • DDD)



The year has barely begun and already here's a disc to remember come all

those end-of-year round-ups. Young American tenor Nicholas Phan isn't exactly a newcomer – this is his third solo album, and both 'Winter Words' (4/12) and 'Still Falls the Rain' (12/12) made the *New York Times*' 'best of' list – but, with a performing career based largely in North America and mainland Europe, rumours have yet to turn into an established reputation in the UK. Surely this disc must finally change that.

In the two years since 'Still Falls the Rain', Phan's pure, unworked tenor has broadened its palette, varnishing the lovely English core of the voice with softer, subtler shades and greater control. There's a directness to Phan's delivery, a clarity to his diction that has previously found its home in Britten's text-driven settings. Now he looks back to Britten's own inspirations, to the lute songs of Dowland and Morley, Purcell and Lanier – as close, perhaps, as singers get to the naked purity and exposure of Bach's solo instrumental works.

Phan has shaped his choices into a single unfolding narrative. Love (for the ubiquitous Celia) turns to heartbreak and eventually death in a disc whose dramatic arc renders Purcell's 'Evening Hymn' – the inevitable closer – cruelly poignant. Arrangements and realisations are intelligent and exquisitely played by Michael Leopold (lute) and Ann Marie

Morgan (viola da gamba), shading the many repetitions of these strophic songs with delicate, telling variations – Lanier's seven-minute 'No more shall meads be deck'd' reimagines its textures afresh in every verse.

Simple pleasures – musical interplay among sympathetic colleagues, text and music each revealing the other, a voice doing what it does best – are celebrated, amplified here. Sometimes the greatest sophistication lies in the greatest simplicity.

Alexandra Coghlan

'Sacred Songs of Life & Love'

Antognini I am the rose of Sharon **Ešenvalds** O salutaris hostia **Martinaitis** Alleluia **Nystedt** Two Prayers of Kierkegaard **Pärt** Bogoróditse Djévo. Magnificat. Nunc dimittis. Seven Magnificat Antiphons **S-D Sandström** Four Songs of Love

Natalie Campbell, Julianna Emanski, Amber

Wellborn *sops* Douglas Dodson *countertenor*

South Dakota Chorale / Brian A Schmidt

Pentatone © PTC5186 530 (53' • DDD/DSD)



That Stephen Layton's recording of

contemporary Baltic choral music, 'Baltic Exchange', with Polyphony (4/10) displays no overlap of repertoire with the South Dakota Chorale's survey of choral music from the Baltic States, 'Sacred Songs of Life & Love', is testament to the variety of high-quality choral music emerging from that region over the course of the last generation. The choral tradition in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia is as rich and musically all-pervasive as it is in Britain and stretches back even further: millennia into a history that is concealed in its vocal music of all types.

The South Dakota Chorale started their recording career relatively recently but they are more than well suited to this full-bodied repertoire. They address the common lyricism of the music through a warmth of sound and sonority that is not only notably varied in tone and colour but which is all but perfect in blend, ensemble and intonation, and this does particular justice to the dramatically contrasting works of Martinaitis and Nystedt (both of whom died in 2014) and the substantial-but-ephemeral *O salutaris hostia* by Ēriks Ešenvalds, whose profile has rightly been raised considerably over recent years by single-composer discs of his work. They apply the same open-throated approach to the works by Arvo Pärt with which the disc

is bookended, and it is only here that there is any sense of a lack of authenticity. That, though, is simply because this synthetic lyricism injects a sound that has a contemplative disposition that is the essence of those pieces with a more soupy quality; but there is in no way any sense of compromised validity as a result – just difference.

Caroline Gill

'Where Are You'

'Pieces from Warsaw'

Bembinow Ave maris stella. Beatus servus. Beatus vir **Borzym Jnr** Agnus Dei. Mors Laocoontis **Kowalski** Domine Deus II. Where are you **Łukaszewski** Nunc dimittis. Responsoria Tenebrae – O vos omnes **proMODERN Contemporary Vocal Sextet** Sartori © SARTON015-2 (41' • DDD)



The proMODERN Sextet, new to me, is a highly accomplished group of young singers

specialising in contemporary Polish music, and their biography lists a number of composers with whom they collaborate regularly, including the four represented on this disc. Of these, only Łukaszewski's music was familiar to me but I am very pleased to have made the acquaintance of the work of the others.

In many ways the most original work here is by Andrzej Borzym Jnr. His *Agnus Dei*, the opening of which is particularly striking, works through a wide range of textures and techniques into a cumulatively impressive work that the group hopes might become part of a complete setting of the Mass. I hope so too. Also remarkable is his *Mors Laocoontis*, to a lengthy text from Virgil, which again displays a remarkable understanding of vocal texture.

Not all the music here is so immediately impressive but Łukaszewski's dark-hued *O vos omnes* and gently pulsing *Nunc dimittis* are also highlights. This last was originally written for the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, and is sung here in a new arrangement that makes the most of proMODERN's bright timbre and agility, and their ability to place chords with tremendous precision. The sound they make is in many ways actually a very English one – think of The King's Singers with added female voices – but that does not mean that it lacks passion; quite the reverse. I look forward to hearing much more from this splendid group, and much more in particular from Andrzej Borzym.

Ivan Moody

REISSUES

David Threasher on Max Goberman's Haydn cycle and **James Jolly** on DG's complete Brahms choral music

A Haydn rediscovery



Max Goberman's pioneering Haydn symphony series returns in an enticing box from Sony Classical

Max Goberman was something of a renaissance man. A violinist who took lessons from Leopold Auer and played in the Philadelphia Orchestra, and a conductor who studied with Fritz Reiner, he was also something of an entrepreneur, setting up not only the New York Sinfonietta (NYS) but also his own record label, the Library of Recorded Masterpieces (LRM). His repertoire was wide-ranging: in parallel with the

European classics, he enjoyed a career as a Broadway pit conductor – he presided over the premiere of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* in 1957 – while the NYS specialised in performances of small-scale Baroque music.

His name will be best known to Haydn enthusiasts, however, as the man who inaugurated the first recorded cycle of Haydn symphonies. Opting to use the Vienna State Opera Orchestra, the

omens were good: HC Robbins Landon's scholarship ensured the works were available in reliable editions (Landon also acted as producer for the recordings) and technology was coming on apace, so offering bang-up-to-date three-track stereo recording.

Vienna in the early 1960s must have been the hottest place on earth, musically speaking, with Solti not far away at the Sofiensaal (recording Wagner's *Ring* for Decca with Christopher Raeburn and Erik Smith). Everything was going swimmingly and 45 symphonies (and three overtures) had been recorded when Goberman died suddenly in 1962 at the age of 53, bringing the project to a juddering halt.

Nevertheless, the recordings appeared on LP on Goberman's LRM label – albeit briefly; some returned later in the decade as Odyssey reissues, but mastered without the all-important third channel, and they soon disappeared as well. For far too long Goberman's partial cycle has been available only from thrift shops and second-hand record specialists. More recently, unofficial transfers from the LPs have become available online, but the recent issue on 14 discs of the Goberman recordings brings them back into circulation after almost half a century in the wilderness.

A good deal of detective work has gone into assembling the sources for the remastering. LRM sold the Goberman tapes to CBS Masterworks in the 1960s, but their documentation was poor; so, since the half-inch magnetic tapes had gone astray, the two-track Odyssey masters and even mint-condition LPs have been used. The results are better than some online chatter might lead one to believe. The ear soon adjusts to the 'glare' often associated with 55-year-old LP transfers, and Goberman's use of a small, lithe band, along with (for the time) advanced notions of period practice and the use of good editions, makes their rediscovery a feast for the ear of Haydn enthusiasts.

Symphony No 1 gets off to a good start with thrusting tempos and fairly tight ensemble. Some doubts arise as early as No 2, however, the band already sounding tentative in what must, after all, have been almost totally unfamiliar music. Tuning goes awry in No 3 and the Mantovani-like effect in the *Nachtmusik* slow movement of No 4 is most peculiar in the long notes of the melody. No 5, however – along with the next work in the set, the Overture to *L'infedeltà delusa* – demonstrates what has long been talked about as one of the virtues of these recordings, the whooping high horns that are so characteristic of Haydn's symphonies of this period. Haydn had

only sporadic access to trumpet players in his bands, so compensated by writing for horns crooked at the top extreme of their range – a truly joyous sound when executed well. The *locus classicus* of this style of horn-writing is the *Maria Theresia* Symphony, No 48, whose stratospheric horn-writing is deliriously rendered here. So too in the slow movement of No 51, a typical piece of Haydnesque humour: the first horn spins a gorgeous cantilena touching the instrument's highest register; the second replies by descending almost obscenely to the opposite extreme. Glorious!

One effect of the side-to-side stereo separation of violins is that ensemble lapses are made more evident. What players and producers could get away with in the days of the nascent LP doesn't stand up to digital scrutiny. The finale of No 41, for example – a bit of a scramble at the best of times – comes rather unstuck in a few places. But then it's hard to imagine that rehearsal or recording time was exactly generous. There's warmth, though, in a handful of later symphonies: the *Oxford* (No 92) and two of the 'London' set, the *Miracle* (No 96) and No 98. There's something of a comb-and-paper effect to the cors anglais in the *Philosopher* (No 22), but the slow opening movement to another 'church symphony', *La Passione*, is played with a restrained grandeur that contrasts well with the Sturm und Drang of the ensuing *Allegro*.

This 14-disc set makes available this fascinating slice of Haydn history on record – and cheaply, too: it sells for about £29. Only one major lacuna now remains in the Haydn discography: the Ernst Maerzendorfer cycle for Musical Heritage Society, begun shortly after Góberman's death and ultimately the first complete recorded Haydn symphonic survey. Would that someone were to remaster that...

David Threasher



THE RECORDING

Haydn Symphonies and Overtures
Vienna State Opera Orchestra / Max Góberman
Sony Classical © (22 discs) 88843 07394-2

Choral music by Brahms



Günter Jena's NDR Chorus shine in Brahms's choral music

Choral music occupied a very special place in Brahms's life; not only did he compose a lot of music for massed voices (enough to fill the seven discs of this box-set), but he conducted choruses in Hamburg, Detmold and Vienna with whom he also explored music of earlier periods (he was a subscriber to the first complete edition of JS Bach's music, for example). Deutsche Grammophon assembled a complete Brahms edition for release to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth. It came out on 62 LPs (reviewed in May 1983) and since then has re-emerged in various combinations. Now part of Universal's Collectors' Edition series, the choral works set occupies a box of its own.

The first thing to say is that this collection has changed slightly since the LP release, though it replicates the CD set released for the 1997 anniversary of Brahms's death. Giuseppe Sinopoli's *A German Requiem* has been replaced by a live 1987 recording from Vienna conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini. It's a performance that emphasises the work's serenity and spirituality over its drama, though it's by no means lacking in spine. Giulini's two soloists, Andreas Schmidt and Barbara Bonney, are on fine form, although the halo of sound surrounding them takes a little getting used to. I particularly like Schmidt's approach which seems to admit a

slight vulnerability, a very human response. The Vienna State Opera Chorus sing with fine, focused tone and the Vienna Philharmonic play with great beauty.

Sinopoli's recordings of the bulk of the remaining works for chorus and orchestra, made in Prague with the Prague Philharmonic Chorus and Czech Philharmonic, are retained and are very fine and alive to the drama of much of this music. Brigitte Fassbaender is magnificent in the *Alto Rhapsody* and René Kollo makes a strong impression in *Rinaldo* (Sinopoli's orchestral support is superb here). And the *Triumphlied*, with Wolfgang Brendel, is full of fire and majesty.

The remainder of the five CDs is entrusted to the NDR Chorus under its conductor Günter Jena. This is, on the whole, music you rarely encounter in concert. Apart from the wind- and timpani-

accompanied *Begräbnisgesang* (a magnificent pre-echo of the *German Requiem*), the bulk is either accompanied by organ or presented a *cappella* which calls for a choir who can sing with firm, focused tone, and the NDR Chorus certainly deliver that. Jena has the measure of this music; perhaps there's something in the water in Hamburg that delivers such sympathy, or rather, more probably, the tradition of singing Bach chorales – and Jena is a celebrated Bach authority – reaps rich rewards here. (Just listen to the Motets, Opp 29 and 110, and you're whisked back to Bach's world.) The four *Gesänge*, Op 17, scored for female chorus, two horns and harp, are truly magical: the combination of sonorities is quite ravishing and the recording beautifully balanced to ensure a true sense of perspective.

You probably wouldn't want to listen to these discs from end to end, but in small groups they make for wonderful listening, and it's hard to imagine them better done. This is music that rounds out a portrait of the composer in a very special way.

James Jolly

THE RECORDING



Brahms
Complete Choral Works
Carlo Maria Giulini; Giuseppe Sinopoli; Günter Jena
DG Collectors Edition © ⑦
479 4220

Opera



Richard Wigmore reviews a new exploration of Joseph Kraus:
'The playing throughout bristles with energy, natural horns and contrabassoon lending an aptly raucous buzz' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 111**



Mike Ashman watches Zurich's Flying Dutchman on DVD:
'Terfel delivers the role with massive conviction and constant cherishing of the vital words in a phrase' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 113**

Brian

The Tigers

Teresa Cahill, Alison Hargan, Marilyn Hill
Smith *sops* **Ameral Gunson** *mez* **Anne-Marie**
Owens *contr* **John Dudley** *counterten* **Paul Crook,**
Harry Nicholl, John Winfield *tens* **Richard Angas,**
Ian Caddy, Alan Opie, Norman Welsby, Kenneth
Woollam *bars* **Michael Bundy, Alan Watt** *bass-bars*
Malcolm Donnelly, Henry Herford, Eric Shilling,
Dennis Wicks *basses*
BBC Singers and Symphony Orchestra /
Lionel Friend
Testament     SBT3 1496 (161' • DDD • T)



Is it really 32 years since the one – and only – performance of Brian's vibrant,

surreal anti-war opera *The Tigers*? Mounted by the BBC (produced by Elaine Padmore), *The Tigers*, cast in a two-scene Prologue and three acts, was composed in short score between 1916 and 1919 but not orchestrated until 1927–29, although the various orchestral extracts (2/12, A/14) were ready in full garb by 1924.

If Spike Milligan had written the libretto in 1916, it could scarcely have been more absurd or surreal than the one Brian himself devised. The action plunges straight into the riotous Prologue (as would Busoni's near-contemporaneous *Doktor Faust*) set on Hampstead Heath that is over twice as long as the official first act. The Prologue features a huge array of characters, none of whom recur in the main body of the opera; during it nothing of larger consequence occurs, except the posting of a notice announcing the declaration of war. The restrained second scene's main elements do recur later – an assignation between two lovers (here Pantal  n and Columbine) and officious policemen. But only in the brief first act, in many respects a delayed prelude to the main part of the opera, are the principal characters unveiled, not least the Tigers themselves, a regiment of great ancestry and tradition. Act 2 centres around a mock battle between the Tigers and

another regiment, the Hornets, which descends into farce when the Tigers decide to make hay with the local farm girls instead. Act 3 hinges on a garbled message muddling birthdays, Zeppelins and blackouts – and the cooks' prank in the local church bell tower. Acts 2 and 3 are prefaced by dream sequences: in Act 2 for the Tigers' redoubtable colonel, Sir John Stout (sung with wonderful pomposity by Malcolm Donnelly); but that in Act 3 totally alters the plane on which the opera takes place. Local policemen, slumbering on duty, dream two dark, fantastical visions – the symphonic dances 'Gargoyles' and 'Lacryma' – lifting the veil on the horrors of war and setting the comic elements in stark contrast. Along the way, Sir John becomes enamoured of the flirtatious Mrs Pamela Freebody (deliciously sung by Teresa Cahill) and it is they, after all the various mix-ups have been resolved, who close the opera as the embodiment of perhaps the work's main message: make love, not war.

The BBC's performance, made with some of the finest British singers of the day, still sounds bright and vivid. Lionel Friend – who conducted a number of Brian's works around this time – had the measure of this coruscating, multilayered and stylistically diverse score, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra's virtuosity still astounds. Testament's transfer is brilliant and bright, catching the music's many facets with remarkable clarity and faithfulness. What the work needs now is a staging. What an event that would be.

Guy Rickards

Keiser

Pomona

Melanie Hirsch *sop* Pomona
Doerthe Maria Sandmann *sop* Flora
Olivia Vermeulen *mez* Ceres
Magdalene Harer *sop* Vertumnus
Julian Podger *ten* Mercurius
Knut Schoch *ten* Zephyrus
Jan Kobow *ten* Jaison/Jupiter
Raimonds Spogis *bar* Bacchus
J  rg Gottschick *bar* Vulcanus

Capella Orlandi Bremen / Thomas Ihlenfeldt
CPO     CPO777 659-2 (123' • DDD)



Reinhard Keiser's formative musical training was in Leipzig, similar to

the slightly younger cluster of Graupner, Fasch, Heinichen and Telemann. From the late 1690s Keiser had a long association with Hamburg's Theater am G  nsemarkt, where the serenata *Pomona* (1702) was performed to celebrate the birthday of King Frederick IV of Denmark. Subtitled 'Dispute of the Four Seasons', the deities Flora, Ceres, Pomona, Vulcan and Bacchus dispute which of the four seasons is the best. The matter is settled by Jupiter, who proclaims in favour of autumn (championed by Pomona, goddess of fruit-bearing trees and gardens).

Capella Orlandi Bremen's single strings are few in number but play with finesse and engaging characterisation. Chittarone player Thomas Ihlenfeldt directs Keiser's smoothly flowing sequences of short and snappy numbers immaculately (only two arias exceed four minutes' duration). The continuo group play tastefully in many little arias where the attention is sagely devoted to the singer and the poetry, such as Flora's intimate advocacy of spring accompanied by a lovely cello obbligato. Knut Schoch's tender Zephyrus and Doerthe Maria Sandmann's lightly tripping Flora sing a pleasantly summery duet that I suspect Handel recycled in an Italian cantata. Olivia Vermeulen's refined singing in Ceres's entrance aria has delightful passages accompanied by weightless violins without basso continuo. Jan Kobow's melodic shaping and poetic delivery of words are well suited to Jaison's sentimental expression of love for Ceres. The oboists produce lyrical colour in the Overture, a few brief dances and Bacchus's merry song in praise of 'the noble juice of the vine' (sung with amiable wit by Raimonds

Spogis). In the title-role, Melanie Hirsch has a series of blissfully sweet melodious arias, such as her moralising that childhood is like spring, youth like summer, but that only autumn is wise and fruitful (featuring poignant passages for two oboes and bassoon). Perhaps the artistic success of this might encourage more interest in reviving Keiser operas that Handel played in Hamburg, studied closely and borrowed from copiously.

David Vickers

Kraus

'Arias and Overtures'

Ch'io mai vi possa, VB59. Du i hvars oskuldfulla blick, VB30. Du temps, qui détruit tout, VB58. Hör mina ömma suckar klaga, VB26. Ma tu tremi, VB63. Parvum quando cerno Deum, VB5. Sentimi, non partir!...Al mio bene, VB55. Overtures – Äfventyraren, VB32; Konung Gustav III Begravnings-kantat, VB42; Proserpin, VB19; Zum Geburtstage des Königs Gustav III, VB41

Monica Groop *mez*

Helsinki Baroque Orchestra / Aapo Häkkinen

Naxos © 8 572865 (63' • DDD)



'That man has a noble style, the like of which I have found in no one else,' remarked Gluck

of Joseph Martin Kraus (1756-92), Mannheim-trained but active for most of his career in Stockholm. Gluck is indeed a dominant influence in these assorted overtures and arias, though Kraus's colourful orchestration, vividly delineated by the Helsinki period band, owes more to his Mannheim experiences.

Kraus was terminally ill when he composed his last and perhaps most imposing work, the *Begravnings-kantat* ('Burial Cantata') for Gustav III, shot at a masked ball. The Overture's mingled hieratic solemnity and poignant lyricism make it all the more frustrating that the complete cantata is still unavailable on disc. The *allegros* of the *Proserpin* and *Äfventyraren* overtures compensate in swashbuckling energy for what they lack in memorable themes, while the fine *Birthday Overture for Gustav* contrasts a limpid – and decidedly Gluckian – minuet tune with thunderous eruptions for full orchestra. The playing throughout bristles with energy, with natural horns and contrabassoon lending an aptly raucous buzz to the *tutti* textures.

Interleaved with the overtures, the polyglot vocal numbers are all comparatively brief and technically undemanding. They range from the

ingenuous ariette 'Du temps, qui détruit tout' (shades, again, of Gluck), via the pastoral Christmas song 'Parvum quando cerno Deum', coloured by the throaty timbre of cors anglais, to a touching scena from Metastasio's cantata *La tempesta*. Monica Groop, with her tangy, vibrant mezzo, always sounds expressively involved, though her phrasing can be gusty and her dynamic level tends to hover around *mezzo-forte* – an impression enhanced by the voice's close miking in a rather boomy acoustic. The *Begravnings-kantat* Overture apart, I wouldn't rank the works here among Kraus's most distinctive. But there is plenty to enjoy in music that is never less than agreeable and carefully composed, from a composer well above the common run of 18th-century *Kleinmeister*.

Richard Wigmore

Rameau

Les fêtes de Polymnie

Véronique Gens *sop* Stratonice/Oriade
Emőke Baráth *sop* Polymnie/Follower of Hébé/Syrian
Aurélia Legay *sop* Mnemosyne/Hébé/Argélie
Márta Stefanik *sop* Victory
Mathias Vidal *ten* Chef des Arts/Alcide/Antiochus
Thomas Dolié *bar* Jupitere/Séleucus/Zimès
Domonkos Blazsó *bass* Fate
Purcell Choir; Orpheus Orchestra / György Vashegyi
Glossa © 2 GCD923502 (127' • DDD)



Like *Les fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour* (Glossa, 12/14), *Les fêtes de Polymnie* is an

opera-ballet. But whereas the former was to be composed for a royal wedding, *Polymnie* was written to celebrate the defeat of the forces commanded by the Duke of Cumberland (not yet the 'butcher' of Culloden) at the Battle of Fontenoy. Staged at the Paris Opéra on October 12, 1745, it marked the first collaboration between Rameau and Louis de Cahusac, the librettist of several further operas including *Les fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour* and *Zoroastre*.

The Prologue takes place in the Temple of Memory. In the presence of the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, a golden statue is erected to 'the greatest of kings', who has triumphed over Strife and Jealousy. We could be back in the *grand siècle* but the sovereign is now Louis XV. Polyhymnia, the Muse of lyric poetry, invites the victorious warriors to be entertained at her festivities. In the first *entrée*, 'Legend', Hebe tells Alcides (Hercules) that she

cannot marry without the consent of Fate; Jupiter intercedes on her behalf, Fate gives the nod, and all is well. In 'History', King Seleucus returns from battle to marry Stratonice; when he sees that she and his son Antiochus are in love, he gracefully withdraws his suit. The last *entrée*, 'Enchantment', has Zimès bewitched into cruelty by a malevolent fairy. Fate has decreed that only love will release him from the spell. Argélie and his mother Oriade bring this about.

The Hungarian chorus and period orchestra are so idiomatic that they could easily have come straight from the banks of the Seine. There's a very fine haute-contre in Mathias Vidal. In 'Legend', Alcides is a bit of a wimp – no club-wielder he – but Vidal makes you care for his plight through his sensitive phrasing. As Antiochus, he is tender in a G minor air in which contentment is tinged with wistfulness. Lovely singing from the three women, and Thomas Dolié movingly expresses Zimès's remorse. And the music! An all-too-brief Lullian sleep scene, an eight-minute chaconne, a hunting chorus (with some terrific horn-playing) and much else besides, all faultlessly brought together by György Vashegyi. Most enjoyable.

Richard Lawrence

R Strauss



Der Rosenkavalier

Krassimira Stoyanova *sop* Die Feldmarschallin
Sophie Koch *sop* Octavian
Günther Groissböck *bass* Baron Ochs
Mojca Erdmann *sop* Sophie
Adrian Eröd *bar* Faninal
Stefan Pop *ten* Italian Tenor
Wiebke Lehmkuhl *contr* Annina
Rudolf Schasching *ten* Valzacchi
Silvana Dussmann *sop* Leitmetzerin
Salzburg Festival and Theatre Childrens' Chorus;
Vienna State Opera Chorus; Vienna Philharmonic
Orchestra / Franz Welser-Möst
Stage director Harry Kupfer
Video director Brian Large
C Major Entertainment © 2 DVD 719308;
© 719404 (3h 35' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •
DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)
Recorded live at the Grosses Festspielhaus,
Salzburg, August 8-14, 2014



This constitutes the third release in a loose Straussian triptych from C Major, following DVD/Blu-rays of *Capriccio* and *Arabella* featuring Renée Fleming. The casting here is a little less starry and arguably not really the sort of prestige line-

up one would expect from this glitziest of festivals. As it is, Krassimira Stoyanova's Marshallin is very respectable – in terms of both vocal performance and characterisation – but hardly loveable or charismatic enough: it's an often beautifully sung portrayal but the necessary charm and humanity seem to evade the Bulgarian soprano. Sophie Koch, a vastly experienced Octavian, sings well enough, too, but her generously produced mezzo has now lost some of its shine. Mojca Erdmann's pretty but vapid Sophie, however, is sung with unreliable and unappealingly vinegary, thin tone, which undermines the score's ethereal duets.

None of these singers feels terribly engaged, either, for which some blame must lie with the director. Once an *enfant terrible* of the East German scene but now in his late seventies, Harry Kupfer has created a production, vaguely updated to around the time of composition, which seems to have left its teeth in the glass on the bedside table. Hans Schavernoch's designs are imposing and stylish, featuring large moveable chunks of set against extra-large projections of Viennese buildings and landscapes, which add to the pervading sense of luxurious, monochrome melancholy.

Kupfer's main failure is that he doesn't flesh out the relationships, nor does he make enough of the most interesting piece of casting: that of a young and hunky bass as Baron Ochs. Günther Groissböck is in many ways terrific, and sings the role – with many standard cuts opened out – impressively. He comes across as suitably boorish, laddish and unpleasant, but, without the discrepancy in ages, a far from unfeasible match for this Sophie, meaning that the whole basis of the comedy is undermined. Despite what its detractors say, *Der Rosenkavalier* can be funny, and it certainly should be moving. Here it is neither. The Vienna Philharmonic play the score with wonderful style, nevertheless, and Franz Welser-Möst's conducting keeps things ticking along efficiently. **Hugo Shirley**

Verdi

Don Carlo

Ramón Vargas *ten*..... Don Carlo
Svetlana Kasyan *sop*..... Elisabetta di Valois
Ludovic Tézier *bar*..... Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa
Daniela Barcellona *mez*..... Princess Eboli
Ildar Abdrazakov *bass*..... Philip II
Marco Spotti *bass*..... Grand Inquisitor
Roberto Tagliavini *bass*..... Monk
Sonia Ciani *sop*..... Tebaldo
Erika Grimaldi *sop*..... Voice from Heaven
Dario Prola *ten*..... Count of Lerma
Luca Casalin *ten*..... Herald

Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Regio, Turin / Gianandrea Nosedà

Stage director **Hugo De Ana**

Video director **Ariella Beddini**

Opus Arte (F) ② DVD OA1128D; (F) ③ OABD7139D
 (3h 37' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p • DTS-HD MA5.0,
 DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • O • S/s)



It seems a pity that the initiative and success at Turin's Teatro Regio of the wide-ranging Gianandrea Nosedà should

be represented currently on DVD by this relentlessly old-fashioned production of the four-act Italian *Don Carlo*. Hugo De Ana's staging is not much more than a parade of giant walls and statues and history-book copycat costumes (Eboli even gets her eye-patch and Philip his stick). By the time the final act starts you may be praying never to see another extra awkwardly negotiating 16th-century high-ranking church costume.

In front of all this a pretty distinguished singing cast injects some energy and clarity into the proceedings, at least as far as their own characters go. They are assisted by Nosedà's sensitive and authentic balancing of the score; like Abbado, he can convey this work's large-scale atmosphere without resorting to leaden un-Italian tempos and weight.

Abdrazakov brings similar virtues to his Philip, making real the king's loneliness and dilemmas about his son and the Inquisitor. He is also able to show human rather than semaphored reactions to Grand Operatic moments like the embassy of the Flemish deputies and the mob invasion of Carlo's prison. More conventionally, Tézier puts a lot of expression into his Posa and Barcellona enjoys the frustrations of Eboli. All these three are in good voice, as is Vargas, whose Carlo dramatically is rather weak and weeping. On the one night in question, only the relative newcomer Svetlana Kasyan was under par. A handsome-looking stage presence who clearly knows what her part is about, she sounds less confident at both the top and especially the bottom of her range.

The sound is convincing and the filming uncontroversial. The tricky ending (here with unwanted focus on what the notes call 'a thwacking high B for the soprano') is as inconclusive as ever. The conductor and Abdrazakov's Philip are worth attention. Otherwise, unless you're obsessed by concept-less pageantry, I'd take more risks with either the Pappano/Bondy or Pappano/Stein versions,

the de Billy/Konwitschny or the older Chailly/Decker. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparisons:

Pappano, dir Bondy (3/97⁸, 4/01)

(WARN) DVD 0630 16318-2

Chailly, dir Decker (12/05) (OPAR) DVD OA0933D

de Billy, dir Konwitschny (1/08⁸) (ARTH) DVD 107 187

Pappano, dir Stein (SONY) DVD 88843 00576-9;

③ 88843 00577-9

Verdi

Il giorno di regno

Mikheil Kiria *bar*..... Belfiore
Alice Quintavalla *sop*..... Marchesa del Poggio
Angela Nisi *sop*..... Giulietta
Marco Frusoni *ten*..... Edoardo
Simone Alberti *bar*..... Baron Kelbar
Dario Ciotoli *bar*..... La Rocca
Marco Miglietta *ten*..... Delmonte
Roberto Jachini Virgili *ten*..... Count Ivrea
Riccardo Certo *bar*..... Servant
Belcanto Chorus; Rome Sinfonietta / Gabriele Bonolis

Tactus (M) ② TC812290 (108' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Teatro Flavio Vespasiano, Rieti, November 2013



After the success of his first opera, *Oberto*, Verdi was contracted to write three more for

La Scala. Sad to say, *Il giorno di regno* – 'King for a day' – had a miserable gestation and a disastrous birth. The composer chose a libretto by Felice Romani already set by Gyrowetz. While he was working on the opera, his wife died suddenly. Merelli, the Scala impresario, refused to release Verdi from his contract; the premiere, which duly took place on September 5, 1840, was a fiasco and Merelli immediately cancelled the remaining scheduled performances. Productions elsewhere in Italy were successful but Verdi wrote no more comic operas till *Falstaff* (1893).

The opera is by no means a total failure but its cause will not be advanced by this indifferent recording. The original title of the libretto was the more informative *Il finto Stanislao* – 'The false Stanislaus'. Belfiore is posing as King Stanislaus for political reasons. As the guest of the Baron for marriage celebrations, he engineers the wedding of the Baron's daughter Giulietta to Edoardo rather than to the latter's uncle, and prevents the Baron's widowed niece – with whom he is in love – from marrying the Count. As was still – just – the *opera buffa* convention, the set pieces are separated by *secco* recitative: indeed, Verdi's debt to Rossini and Donizetti is apparent throughout. The duet for Edoardo and



Going native: Bryn Terfel brings massive conviction to the title role in Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* in Andreas Homoki's production for the Zurich Opera

Belfiore could be from *L'elisir d'amore*, while the scenes for the *buffo* basses, the Baron and the treasurer La Rocca, hark back to *La Cenerentola*.

This performance is spirited but recorded in a dull, constricted acoustic. The *buffo* duets go well and Alice Quintavalla is a lively widow. But, voice for voice, Gardelli wins every time. Quintavalla is outclassed by Cossotto, Alberti can't match Wixell's stylish phrasing and Frusoni sounds strained compared to the honeyed tones of the young Carreras. The new critical edition is credited: the general absence of second stanzas in the cabalettas did provoke a raised eyebrow. Some stage noise; lukewarm applause. Stick to Gardelli.

Richard Lawrence

Selected comparison:

Gardelli (9/74*, 12/89) (PHIL.) 475 6772PM2

Wagner

Der fliegende Holländer

Bryn Terfel *bass-bar* Holländer
Anja Kampe *sop* Senta
Matti Salminen *bass* Daland
Marco Jentzsch *ten* Erik
Liliana Nikiteanu *mez* Mary
Fabio Trümpy *ten* Steersman
Chorus of Zurich Opera; Zurich Philharmonia / Alain Altinoglu

Stage director **Andreas Homoki**

Video director **Nele Münchmeyer**

DG © DVD 073 5173GH; © 073 5174 1GH

(139' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,

DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, January 2013




In his first production as Zurich Intendant, Andreas Homoki has gone all out to concentrate on the

psychological and socio-political aspects of Wagner's retelling of Heine's story. Nautical imagery is thrown overboard and the story centred on Daland's household, the centre of his trade empire with Africa. The male chorus are clerks and financiers, the women secretaries; a telephone links them to imaginary ships in the outer scenes (the blunt pre-redemption ending version of the score is used, although in one act and with some later modifications). Bryn Terfel's Holländer has the magic magnetic power of disappearing at will. Face paint and tattoos hint that his character may have 'gone native' through his journeys to the Cape. A revolt of his unseen crew when taunted by the Norwegians – a *coup de*

théâtre with a projected burning map – is initiated by Daland's African servant. It suggests the colonies rebelling against commercial exploitation and the Holländer's sympathy with them and antipathy to Daland's capitalist world, perhaps an additional reason for his final rejection of Senta.

For the first two acts Homoki's dramaturgy mines an interesting and novel slant on the piece. Sensing the need for a change of gear in Act 3, he goes a little crazy – but it's never boring. Like Wieland Wagner's 1959 Bayreuth production, his rationale and stage geography naturally forbid a Romantic ending transfiguration over the cliffs and away by sea. But Anja Kampe has been such an energetic life force as Senta that her suicide by Erik's gun is unconvincingly over-convenient.

Musically there's much to shout about. The orchestra acquit themselves well in their two-hour-plus marathon for Altinoglu, who maintains a good pace and uncovers much detail sometimes lost in bigger theatres. Terfel delivers the role with massive conviction and constant cherishing of the vital words in a phrase. Kampe, as hinted above, is a very wholesome and untiring Senta, in no way a mystical neurotic. Salminen is a wise old



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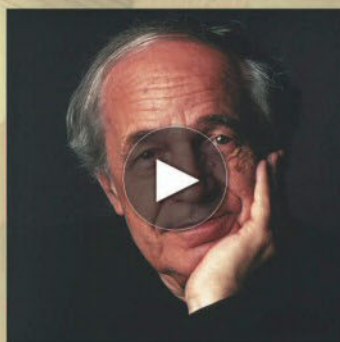


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bear of a Daland who enjoys his text more the older he gets. Jentzsch's Erik was rather pushed at the top of his two arias at the performance(s) recorded. The chorus are busy, active and committed to the task of frequently singing about what isn't there. Good sound and filming and, despite the disappointing ending, I would rate this almost alongside the famous Kupfer Bayreuth production for small-screen

Dutchmen. Mike Ashman

Selected comparisons:

Nelsson, dir Kupfer (11/91⁸, 8/05)

(DG) DVD 073 4041GH

Wagner

Die Walküre

Jon Vickers *ten*.....Siegmond
Claire Watson *sop*.....Sieglinde
Anita Väkki *sop*.....Brünnhilde
Hans Hotter *bass-bar*.....Wotan
Rita Gorr *mez*.....Fricka
Michael Langdon *bass*.....Hunding
Marie Collier *sop*.....Gerhilde
Judith Pierce *sop*.....Helmwige
Julia Malyon *sop*.....Ortlinde
Margreta Elkins *mez*.....Waltraute
Josephine Veasey *mez*.....Rossweisse
Noreen Berry *mez*.....Siegrune
Maureen Guy *mez*.....Grimgerde
Joan Edwards *mez*.....Schwertleite

Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House,
 Covent Garden / Georg Solti

Testament mono (F) (4) SBT4 1495 (3h 44' • ADD)

Recorded live, October 2, 1961



The first release on disc of this 1961 broadcast is a potent reminder of the

strengths (and quirks) of Georg Solti's Wagner at the start of his artistic directorship of the post-war Covent Garden company. The reviews quoted in Tony Locantro's comprehensive booklet-note were right to emphasise the stylistic change from the lyricism of Rudolf Kempe's 1950s London *Ring*. It's clear already that Solti did not need Decca's Sofiensaal acoustic – in the *Ring* recording that he had just begun – to make 'Wagnerian thunder' with an encouraged brass section.

But do not fear the excess of overloud playing that has become the clichéd description of the conductor's Wagner. The sensitive chamber-like approach to the start of the Act 2 monologue taken here by both conductor and Hans Hotter's Wotan makes one wonder at the awed attention given subsequently to any quiet interpretation of this music. Solti also

knows where to let the score breathe – in the Todesverkündigung or the final duet, for two key examples, but not in what he clearly saw as the *stretto* of an Act 1 finale after Siegmund draws the sword. (Jon Vickers, whose squabbles with the maestro are related in the notes, audibly seeks the space allowed him by Knappertsbusch, Leinsdorf and Karajan.)

The cast is unpredictable but strong. Finn Anita Väkki is a discovery, lyrical, well-focused, good with the text, even if the press were clearly hankering for the louder steel of Birgit Nilsson. Claire Watson, a Solti favourite from Europe, is an intelligent, mezzo-ish Sieglinde; Rita Gorr a real grande dame of a Fricka; Langdon an effective Hunding from the company roster. Vickers delivers his emotive view of Siegmund with appropriate passion and Hotter (also the stage director here) paces his voice well and remains supreme among Wotans of this era. The Valkyries are stars in the making. The sound is surprisingly rich in colour and atmosphere for its mono broadcast date; warmly recommended as an important adjunct to existing contemporary performances from Solti, Kempe (Covent Garden and Bayreuth) and Leinsdorf.

Mike Ashman

Piotr Beczala

'The French Collection'

Berlioz Béatrice et Bénédict – Ah! Je vais l'aimer. La damnation de Faust, Op 24 – Merci, doux crépuscule! **Bizet** Carmen – La fleur que tu m'avais jetée **Boieldieu** La dame blanche – Maintenant, observons...Viens, gentille dame **Donizetti** Dom Sébastien – Seul sur la terre...Ange céleste. La favorite – Ange si pur **Gounod** Faust – Salut! demeure chaste et pure. Roméo et Juliette – L'amour! L'amour!...Ah! lève-toi, soleil! **Massenet** Le Cid – Ah! Tout est bien fini! O Souverain, ô juge, ô père. Manon – Toi! Vous!...Oui, c'est moi...N'est-ce plus ma main. Werther – Toute mon âme est là! Pourquoi me réveiller **Verdi** Don Carlos – Fontainebleau! Forêt immense...Je l'ai vue, et dans son sourire

Piotr Beczala *ten* ^a**Diana Damrau** *sop* **Orchestra of the Opéra National de Lyon / Alain Altinoglu**
 DG (F) 479 4101GH (64' • DDD)



Piotr Beczala has built up such good will amid potentially troublesome

Metropolitan Opera productions – from the Las Vegas *Rigoletto* to Tchaikovsky's theatrically static *Iolanta* – that one wants to muster more affection for these performances than the disc allows. The overall package is extremely attractive, with

the well-recorded Opéra National de Lyon orchestra under the highly poetic direction of Alain Altinoglu, and features repertoire that includes old favorites such as the Flower Song from *Carmen* and the excerpt from Donizetti's less-known *Dom Sébastien*. Though his voice is Italianate in its tone, Beczala reportedly studied recordings by great French tenors of the past, and isn't afraid to take high notes in a tasteful, well-calculated mixture of head and chest voice.

However, when Diana Damrau arrives near the end of the disc for the Saint Sulpice scene from *Manon*, one hears what has been missing from Beczala. After only a few arias, one notices that he's making pretty much the same vocal moves in aria after aria, even though their idioms range from the aforementioned *Carmen* to Boieldieu's lighter-weight *La dame blanche*. His vibrato spreads slightly under pressure – which becomes a mild annoyance.

Any such minuses would be far less notable were Beczala more attuned to dramatic content. He seems so bent on singing in good clear French that he neglects using the language as a vehicle for varied emotion. Of course, the characters behind the arias tend to be theatrical types without great dimension. But Damrau's expressive shaping of even some of the less prominent moments of her *Manon* scene show not only what can be done but what needs to be done in this music, particularly on a disc whose arias inhabit such similar emotional moments in their respective plots. Also, Beczala seems not to have a fully developed relationship with the microphone – which he tends to sing *at* rather than *with*.

David Patrick Stearns

'Arias for Domenico Gizzi'

'A Star Castrato in Baroque Rome'

GB Bononcini L'Etearco – Amore inganna; Barbari siete, o Dei **Costanzi** L'Eupatra – Per due pupille belle **Feo** Andromaca – No, non mi basterà bocca vezzosa; Prima l'vorace fulmine **Porpora** Adelaide – Volo il mio sangue a spargere **Sarro** Ginevra principessa di Scozia – Sinfonia; Cieca nave, infidi sguardi. Povero amore tradito. Il Valdemaro – La brama di regno **A Scarlatti** Telemaco: Sinfonia; Crude parche; O a morire o a goder **Vinci** Didone abbandonata – Amore che nasce; Su la pendice alpina

Roberta Invernizzi *sop* **I Turchini / Antonio Florio**
 Glossa (F) GCD922608 (57' • DDD)



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continues with an examination of the Neapolitan castrato Domenico Gizzi (1687-1758). Thirteen arias that Gizzi performed in various Roman theatres between 1718 and 1730 are a treasure trove of fascinating music by celebrated Italian composers whose operas are seldom performed or recorded complete but whose names one encounters frequently in specialist literature. I Turchini's strings seem to occasionally squeeze their way to being in tune but Antonio Florio's sense of detail is spot-on, such as the delicacy of the gently throbbing accompaniment to the bittersweet lament 'Crude parche' from Alessandro Scarlatti's *Telemaco* (1718) and *pizzicato* plucking in the delightful 'Amor che nasce' from Vinci's *Didone abbandonata* (1726).

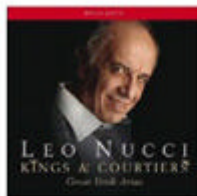
All of the music here is scored for soprano, strings and continuo but most of the arias are different in personality and dramatic intention. They enable an intriguing assessment of how far apart Bononcini and Scarlatti are stylistically from the next generation of composers, even though only a few seasons separated their Roman productions. For instance, Bononcini's old-fashioned plaintive 'Barbara siete, o Dei' from *L'Etearco* (revised for Rome 22 years after its original production in Vienna) is a world away from the galant sway of 'No, non mi basterà bocca vezzosa' from Feo's *Andromaca* (1730). Robert Invernizzi's singing is sensational for its classy divisions, intelligent ornamentation and characterful poise. Fluid cascades of rippling coloratura are required in 'Volo il mio sangue a spargere' from Porpora's *Adelaide* (1723) and are utilised to make a declamatory impact in 'Cieca nave, infidi sguardi' from Sarro's *Ginevra* (1720). A wider variety of instrumentation might be attractive in future volumes, and such a long booklet essay ought to say at least something about the music! **David Vickers**

'Kings and Courtiers'

'Great Verdi Arias'

Attila - Dagli immortali. **Un ballo in maschera** - Alzati...Eri tu che macchiavi quell'anima. **Don Carlo** - Per me giunto è il di. **Falstaff** - Notturmo. **I due Foscari** - O vecchio cor che batti. **Macbeth** - Mal per me che m'affidai. **Nabucco** - Dio di Guida!. **Rigoletto** - Cortigiani, vil razza dannata. **La traviata** - Di provenza il mar. **Il trovatore** - Il balen del suo sorriso. **I Vespri siciliani** - In braccio alle dovizie. L'esule. Invocazione a Maria addolorata. La preghiera del poeta. Sgombra o gentil (all arr Marcarini)

Leo Nucci bar **Pierantonio Cazzulani**, **Lino Pietrantoni** vns **Christian Serazzi** va **Massimo Repellini** vc **Paolo Marcarini** pf **Marta Pettoni** hp
Opus Arte © OACD9026D (68' • DDD)



A different branch of the record industry might have called this recital by the

septuagenarian baritone 'Leo Nucci unplugged'. For a fascinating and effective feature of this studio version of a concert sequence is its accompaniment by just string quartet, piano and harp. Pianist Paolo Marcarini is responsible for arrangements which are both economical and dramatic, strongly emphasising melody. The arrangements become more creative when tiny preludes on themes from the opera replace the recitatives for *Il trovatore*, *Nabucco* and *Attila*, for an instrumental Notturmo drawn from *Falstaff* and in the third of three 'prayers' where Marcarini sets Nucci's own translation of a Gretchen prayer from Goethe's *Faust*.

Working on this more intimate scale, Nucci takes the opportunity here to invest several familiar numbers from his repertoire with most clearly defined emotional colourings. This becomes an acted performance, a fresh look with the benefit of long performance experience rather than just a re-run of standards. If some high or sustained notes are not as solid as they once were, it's of little import given the overall carry of the performance's authority. To take one example of this, the programme is framed by numbers chosen for obvious impact - *Rigoletto*'s 'Cortigiani' and the original *Macbeth*'s 'Mal per me' - which could have made for a melodramatic loud beginning and end. But they're both chilling and genuinely tragic, clearly informed by their places in each opera.

The programme's running order and inclusion of in-built oases through the four songs and interlude make good emotional sense for both singer and listener. Good natural sound. Recommended.

Mike Ashman

'My Life is an Opera'

D Alagna Le dernier jour d'un condamné - Il est dix heures...Encore six heures **Anton y Michelena** A la luz de la luna **Donizetti** Roberto Devereux - Un tenero cuore...Un lampo, un lampo orribile **Gluck** Orpheo ed Euridice - Che farò senza Euridice **Goldmark** Die Königin von Saba - Magische Töne **Gounod** La reine de Saba - Faiblesse de la race humaine...Inspirez-moi, race divine **Leoncavallo** Pagliacci - Introduction; Vesti la giubba **Massenet** **Herodiade** - Ne pouvant reprimier...Adieu donc **Puccini** Madama Butterfly - Addio fiorito asil. **Manon Lescaut** - Ah, Manon, mi tradisce; Donna non vidi mai **Reyer** Sigurd - Esprits, gardiens de

ces lieux vénérés **Rossini** La danza **Tchaikovsky** Eugene Onegin - Pour moi ce jour est tout mystère

Roberto Alagna ten **Aleksandra Kurzak** sop

London Orchestra / **Yvan Cassar**

DG © 481 1524 (57' • DDD)



A cynic might look at Roberto Alagna's new disc, 'My Life is an Opera', and think,

'At least he admits it'. From his stormy La Scala stage departure to his relationship with Angela Gheorghiu, Alagna's personal life is...well, operatic. Somewhat embarrassingly, the disc's booklet has each of the arias listed (out of order from their disc sequencing) to illustrate some signpost in his life, though instead of dealing with the aforementioned incidents in this loose autobiography, the text speaks of the 'meteoric' rise of this 'golden-voiced handsome young genius'. (Oh dear.)

But anyone who thought the medium-weight Alagna voice was on the way out with his Radamès and Otello might be dumbfounded at his excellent state of vocal health on the disc, and the sure dramatic instincts behind it. Most of the repertoire seems new to Alagna's discography, though there are very few signs of having just learnt arias from Gluck's *Orfeo*, *The Queen of Sheba* (both the Gounod and Goldmark versions) and Reyer's *Sigurd*.

Aside from forays into Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* and Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, the programme seems to signify a re-commitment to his fundamentally mid-weight lyric vocal personality, not playing safe in the way he builds phrases and longer-term musical climaxes but rarely pushing his limits (the closest he comes is in an excerpt from his brother David Alagna's opera *Le dernier jour d'un condamné*). Lensky's aria from *Eugene Onegin* is in French translation, not Russian. *Bel canto* choices such as the dramatically charged duet from *Roberto Devereux* (with Aleksandra Kurzak) don't require serious coloratura.

The biggest vocal surprise is 'Magische Töne' from the Goldmark *Sheba*, in which Alagna goes into the falsetto stratosphere with a musico-dramatic effect that stands well alongside performances by the great tenors of the past, including Nicolai Gedda and Leo Slezak. Alagna doesn't have a particularly strong-minded collaborator in the London Orchestra (an ensemble I've never heard of) and its Director Yvan Cassar. But recorded sound is first-class.

David Patrick Stearns

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Richter: a second centenary celebration

A major piano reissue from master pianist, magnificent Bruckner from Carl Schuricht and Stokowski in New York

A quite different Sviatoslav Richter here from the one celebrated in Sony Classical's 'Complete Album Collection' (Replay, 3/15), at least for much of the present set's 51-disc time span. Again, a good deal was taped live, but while Sony's box caught the youngish firebrand on the wing (just two discs of the set are devoted to the later recordings), the **Complete Decca, Philips and DG Recordings** features many performances from Richter's last years where, although he was still capable of brilliance and abandon, the thinker had overtaken the virtuoso many times over. A significant proportion of the material made the contents of Philips's 1994 collection 'Sviatoslav Richter: The Authorised Recordings', which Richter himself initiated then later denounced.

The interpretative variety on offer is fascinating. Richter's 1991 Bach, for

'The Britten Concerto with Britten himself conducting is essential listening'

example (various *English* and *French Suites* and Toccatas), sounding as if lifted straight from the page, direct, sparsely shaded, almost as if sight-read at times – which Richter used to do on stage in his later years. How different a sequence from the '48' recorded in 1962 (disc 26), which is if anything even more poised and caringly voiced than his later RCA recording of the whole work.

Various Haydn sonatas are included, the great E flat, HobXVI/52, twice, one performance from 1966, the other from 1987. Some listeners may well hear Richter's later austerity as a 'plus', others though will relish the earlier performance's hot-headed dynamism. Among the earlier classics is a (mono)

Schumann recital from Prague with its supremely poetic account of various pieces from the *Fantasiestücke*, Op 12, which was among the first vinyl issues to showcase Richter's genius for Western listeners, while famous Warsaw recordings of the Mozart 20th (K466), Rachmaninov Second, Prokofiev Fifth and Schumann concertos convey a highly disciplined brand of expressive shading.

The Tchaikovsky B flat Concerto with Karajan and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra spells mutual respect, Karajan's *tutti* massive and lyrical by turns, Richter's immaculate solo work marmoreal rather than magical. The two Liszt concertos with Kyrill Kondrashin and the LSO offer bravura readings without the least hint of vulgarity, while Liszt is additionally represented by, among various shorter works, a superb 1966 account of the B minor Sonata, a humbling example of how, given the right approach, technical wizardry can access profoundly musical ends.

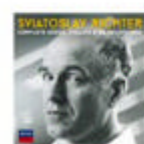
Numerous Beethoven sonatas (13 in all plus the *Diabelli* Variations and two rondos) are among the set's highlights, a broad if rather dry account of the E flat Sonata, Op 10 No 3, being particularly unusual. The complete cello sonatas with Rostropovich are widely viewed as benchmarks, and still stand their ground.

Meanwhile Schubert, always a Richter mainstay, is represented by a probing (and *Gramophone* Award-winning) *Winterreise* with tenor Peter Schreier, and three sonatas, the G major (D894) featuring, as ever with Richter, an unusually broad first movement which, at 27 minutes, is a miracle of sustained concentration. Likewise the 14'44" *Andante* from Mozart's composite Sonata, K533/494, one of eight Mozart sonatas included.

Among the chamber-music recordings perhaps the most distinctive is of Brahms's Second Piano Quartet, where the combination of Richter's boldness and the Borodin Quartet's sweetly yielding pooled tone focuses both poetry and architecture. The same personnel are also responsible for extremely fine performances of both Dvořák piano quintets (Op 5 being a real rarity) and the Franck F minor. We're given Stravinsky and Bartók for two pianos (with Vassili Lobanov, the Bartók with percussion) and two bonus CDs featuring Richter in duet with Benjamin Britten playing Mozart, Schubert (including the great *Fantasie* in F minor, D940) and Debussy. Richter's masterly account of the Britten Piano Concerto with Britten himself conducting is essential listening.

Needless to say, lack of space precludes much more in the way of comment. As to the remaining repertoire, Prokofiev is represented by Sonatas Nos 2, 4, 6 and 8, there are numerous shorter works by Chopin, Scriabin and Rachmaninov, awesome Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues and music by Szymanowski, Wagner, Weber, and Webern, not to mention other chamber works, and Wolf and Schubert Lieder recitals with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Those who invested in Sony Classical's 'Complete Album Collection' will also have to invest in this. If it's a matter of choosing, and if price is no object, then this set should be your first port of call.

THE RECORDING



Sviatoslav Richter: The Complete Decca, Philips and DG recordings'

Decca © (51 discs)
478 6778



A second Berlin version of the Dvořák Violin Concerto from Johanna Martzy and Ferenc Fricsay appears on CD

Johanna Martzy

At first glance the principal attraction in a two-disc set devoted to the art of violinist **Johanna Martzy** (1924-79) appears to duplicate a recording already available from DG. Martzy's expressively projected account of Dvořák's Violin Concerto from June 1953 recently reappeared in DG's 'Ferenc Fricsay: The Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon, Vol 1' (10/14). But a few days earlier a recording of the same work with the same soloists, orchestra and conductor, was made for the RIAS archive at the same Jesus-Christus-Kirche venue. On both, the RIAS Symphony Orchestra under Fricsay offers a detailed and musically sympathetic account of the orchestral score, but the fact that two producers are involved means that the two sound-frames are quite unlike, the RIAS production mellower, more transparent and with a more integrated solo image. DG's relatively up-front recording has a harder edge, Martzy herself is marginally more spot-lit, while her performance, at least in the finale, is a little less genial.

The remainder of Audité's set emanates from the 1960s. Dvořák's Concerto is tailed by a vibrant account of Brahms's First Sonata, and Martzy's sound is darker than in the orchestral work, with an Oistrakh-like radiance about it, especially in the first movement. The second CD opens with solo Bach, the G minor Sonata, and a reading that's notable for its rigour and the rhythmic security of the second movement fugue. Sonatas with piano by Handel (Op 1 No 3) and Vivaldi (RV10, arranged by Respighi), like the Bach, take us back to a

period prior to the onset of 'original instruments' and sound as refreshing now as the 'authentic' performances sounded then. Martzy was a very musical player and charms in various shorter works (the pianist is Jean Antoniotti).

THE RECORDING



Dvořák, Brahms et al
Martzy, Fricsay, Antoniotti
Audité mono ② ③ 23.424

Schuricht at white heat

'The last great Bruckner performance whose insight and musical craftsmanship can be traced back to the age when it was it created.' Richard Osborne's bold proposition closes a perceptive note for a glorious performance of Bruckner's Seventh: the conductor, **Carl Schuricht**, the orchestra the Berlin Philharmonic, and the venue the Grosses Festspielhaus at the 1964 Salzburg Festival. Mono sound notwithstanding (after a while you hardly notice the sonic limitation), Bruckner's most lyrical symphony ebbs and flows as if in the hands of a seasoned string quartet, the phrasing so utterly natural, the orchestral balance superb, the playing in all departments likewise. If you fancy sampling the current issue, try the first movement's blazing coda or any part of the second movement (especially from 3'46" – pure heaven). Only Furtwängler's BPO played this music with as much tenderness. The same concert also included an electrifying version of Mozart's *Prague* Symphony, a performance that reminded me that

Schuricht's rostrum idol – or at least one of them – was Toscanini. Both conductors brought unprecedented levels of heat to the Symphony's outer movements, their tempos similarly fleet, their respective orchestras (NBC SO, BPO), consistently responsive and given to phrasing with a true *cantabile* ... also a memorable attribute in the *Andante*. Both conductors turn the closing *Presto* into a furious tour de force. No repeats, by the way. Utterly unmissable.

THE RECORDING



Bruckner. Mozart
Schuricht
Testament mono ②
SBT2 1498

Rostrum pioneer on a roll

Those who attended – or tuned into – the New York Philharmonic Symphony concert for October 25, 1947 will have heard **Leopold Stokowski** draw every vestige of drama from *Sun Splendor* by Marion Bauer. This nine-minute thriller could do with a local outing, or at least as many as Britten's Piano Concerto has so far received, another work featured on the same Guild CD, the New York premiere in fact (November 1949) played by a brilliant pianist who some years later went on to record the work for EMI, Jacques Abram. He makes the third-movement 'Impromptu' very much his own and imbues the closing 'March' with a sense of chutzpah reminiscent of Prokofiev's Third Concerto. Murky sound means that Debussy's *The Engulfed Cathedral* never fully surfaces, but if all you know of Stokowski in Enescu's *First Romanian Rhapsody* is his lavishly upholstered stereo version with the RCA Victor Symphony, be prepared for a shock: in 1947 with the NYPSO, the velvet veil is removed, and the camp fires blaze in a way that the Living Stereo recording barely hints at. Borodin's *Dances of the Polovtsian Maidens* are unusual in that the relatively unfamiliar 'oriental' melody that opens the sequence (before 'Stranger in Paradise') replaces, in the faster section, the dance with tamps and bass drum. The rest is breathlessly fast and for the most part brilliantly played. Passable sound. ⑥

THE RECORDING



Bauer. Britten. Debussy.
Enescu. Borodin
Stokowski
Guild mono ⑥
GHCD2419

Books



Hugo Shirley reads Ian Bostridge's Schubertian labour of love:

'Some of his most interesting points regard what one might grandly call the ontology of the cycle's protagonist'



Guy Rickards on Hans Gál's internment camp memoirs:

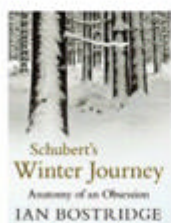
'Never one to discuss private matters, the mere fact of the diary's existence is testament to the depth of feeling internment produced'

Schubert's Winter Journey: Anatomy of an Obsession

By Ian Bostridge

Faber & Faber, HB, 582pp, £20

ISBN 978-0-57128-280-7



During the course of Ian Bostridge's very personal take on Schubert's *Winterreise*, I began to

wonder exactly what the obsession was he was anatomising. Naturally it concerns this masterpiece of song – what he calls the 'first and greatest of concept albums' – but he also takes a broader interest in the history of Austro-German Romanticism, encompassing not only music, art and literature, but politics, economics, science, religion and several dark nooks and crannies in between.

Set off into his chapter on 'Rast' and you find yourself caught up in a mini-treatise – related to the charcoal burner's hut – on the fuels Europe used to heat itself through the centuries, which leads in turn to an examination of social and economic conditions in Schubert's world.

'Frühlingstraum' takes a diversion into the magic realm of ice flowers; the chapters on 'Irrlicht' and 'Die Nebensonnen' give us historico-scientific explanations of those phenomena. Elsewhere he zeroes in, with the help of wide-ranging references and lavish illustrations, on key symbols of German Romanticism: the wanderer, the horn call, the Linden tree, the crow.

The sheer breadth of Bostridge's reach is mightily impressive, reflecting both his 30 years' experience singing these songs and an academic career that included a doctorate on the history of witchcraft. He is especially persuasive regarding why Schubert's cycle still exerts the fascination it does, its laconic poetry and musical economy reflecting, he argues, a very modern sense of fragmentation. He wears his learning and experience lightly, too, proving an erudite, easy-going guide

throughout, writing in prose that is elegant, clear, unpretentious and peppered with personal recollections.

Bostridge admits to his own lack of formal musical training and suggests that this has both disadvantages and advantages. But while he is a self-professed non-musicologist, he is nevertheless adept at dealing with what might be seen as musicological arguments. He has little truck with Maynard Solomon's theories regarding Schubert's sexuality, for example, picking apart their faulty assumptions and misunderstanding of what sex and sexuality were in Biedermeier Vienna. His chapter on 'Wasserflut' involves mainly a discussion of triplet assimilation (whether to align the dotted rhythms of the opening with triplets), which is characterised by the sort of pragmatism that is in fact typical of today's more relaxed, less dogmatically score-bound musicology.

Some of his most interesting points regard what one might grandly call the ontology of the cycle's protagonist. This covers the question of who this wanderer might be (the first chapter suggests a tutor in love with his high-born charge, along the lines of Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse*), but also raises issues regarding where the performer should try to position himself or herself on the spectrum between embodiment of a character, dramatic representation and objective narration. Bostridge also raises at the close the disturbing and mind-bending possibility that when, in 'Der Leiermann', our protagonist asks the Hurdy-Gurdy man to sing his song, that it's the Hurdy-Gurdy man himself who will launch into his own *Winterreise*, perpetuating a cycle of endless performance, of singer becoming listener.

It's an idea that feels typical of a book in which ideas are given free rein, in which Bostridge is allowed to roam unencumbered by the conventions that might be imposed on a more strictly defined guide to the work. (The book doesn't offer footnotes or an index, but does include a bibliography.) Bostridge doesn't always manage to explain

compellingly how his broader historical points should colour our understanding of the songs, either; perhaps that's part of the point, though, leaving the reader to make his or her own links.

Some songs are also given short shrift: not including the couple of pages given over to the German texts and Bostridge's own prose translations of them, we have around half-a-dozen pages each on 'Letzte Hoffnung', 'Im Dorfe' and 'Das Wirtshaus', and a mere two-and-a-half on 'Rückblick'. Are we to assume that these are of little interest compared with 'Gute Nacht' or 'Der Lindenbaum', which are allotted nearly 40 pages each? I did occasionally wish for more on the songs about which he'd written less, and vice versa. It seems a shame, too, that a volume so evangelical about this most German of art forms should plump in its title for Schubert's 'Winter Journey' rather than his *Winterreise*, maintaining a slight awkwardness with English titles throughout.

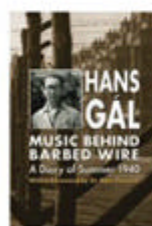
None of this, however, detracts from a beautifully presented, delightful and deeply fascinating book. If it – and the broad exposure it's received – should spark obsessions in others, then music-lovers and the cultural world in general will be very much in Bostridge's debt. **Hugo Shirley**

Music behind Barbed Wire: A Diary of 1940

By Hans Gál (translated by Anthony Fox and Eva Fox-Gál, with essays by Martin Anderson, Richard Dove, Eva Fox-Gál & Walter Kellermann)

Toccata Press, HB, 243pp, £25

ISBN 978-0-907689-75-1



In the dark days of 1940, after the fall of Norway and the Netherlands – allegedly aided by Fifth Columnists – paranoia gripped the British press and establishment, fearing a repeat in Britain.

One disreputable outcome was the misguided decision by the British Government to intern all 'enemy aliens' of German, Austrian or Italian birth, even those known to have fled Nazi persecution, with a further option to deport them to the colonies. Hans Gál (1890-1987) was one of those so interned and – partly as a consequence of his outrage at such an injustice (with refugees from Nazism initially held cheek-by-jowl with known Nazi racists) – kept a diary of the four months he spent behind barbed wire in Edinburgh, Huyton and on the Isle of Man.

Never one to discuss private matters, the mere fact of the diary's existence is testament to the depth of feeling internment produced in him ('a senseless, thoughtless, panic measure'

as he so aptly described it in the first entry, of May 13). Although he made a few type-written copies later for fellow internees, he passed the manuscript to his daughter Eva Fox-Gál only a few years before his death (more than four decades after the events). Not at first aware of its significance and after some soul-searching, she prepared the diary for publication in the original German only in 2003. Now translated into English with her husband, Anthony Fox, it is prefaced by her general biographical introduction to Gál in 1940 and an illuminating essay by Richard Dove on the internment itself. This invaluable book – its relevance extending beyond the purely musical to the socio-political and historical – is completed by Eva's essay, 'Gál in Britain', and short biographies of Gál's family and fellow internees (a roll-call of some of the brightest and best in mid-20th-century medicine, music and science), a CD containing the music written by Gál during this period, an interview by Martin Anderson from December 1986 and a memoir of the composer by fellow internee, the late Dr Walter Kellermann.

The diary's entries cover just those days when events moved Gál to write. When he did put pencil to paper, however, his anger at the injustice of his and others' internment (a constant theme) burns bright, as does concern for his sons, for example on May 17 and 28, rising to a fever pitch in late July when it became clear his



Hans Gál (second from right) with fellow internees (L-R) Willi Gross, Max Sugar and Hugo Schneider

eldest boy, Franz, had been deported to Canada, possibly on the torpedoed transport *Arandora Star* (he was not) on which 700 died. The petty bureaucracy and incompetence of the military authorities are recurrent features, figuring in one form or another in almost every entry. The paucity of contact with the outside world was hugely vexing, whether with loved ones at home or news of how the war was progressing. Newspapers were banned and letters in and out of the camps were fitful in the earliest stages. When news did seep through, especially of the disastrous defeats in Norway (May 16), or France leading to the evacuation from Dunkirk (May 31 and June 18), it is clear how devastating an impact the chain of calamities had. (The pro-Nazi faction was, needless to say, gleeful.) The toll of all this played heavily on Gál's nerves, not least in the onset of a virulent and painful skin condition that eventually facilitated his release in late September. Yet, from time-to-time, there is some wry observation and character assessment about fellow internees and guards enjoying the 'Brilliant summer weather' (May 31), his distaste for boarding houses (June 16) and more amusing anecdotes (July 28, August 1).

The entries of June 4 and August 19 are especially noteworthy for pinpointing the origins of Gál's Huyton Suite and the revue *What a Life!* which are featured on the superb accompanying CD (not yet available separately, though it may be in the future).

The Huyton Suite for flute and two violins – a hugely tricky combination to bring off and created in just 10 days – is a marvellously upbeat four-movement chamber trio. The revue is avowedly satirical, based on events in the lives of the internees up to 250 of whom took part in the performances. For the second of these, Gál added to his irreverent score – brilliantly reconstructed by Michael Freyhan, who conducts the performance from the piano just as the composer did in 1940 – a melodrama, *The Ballad of Poor Jacob* (described in the Diary entry of September 15), in which the 'story of the Eternal Jew of today' is related in a beautifully judged mix of black satire and pathos. The performances are excellent, Freyhan catching the essence of the satire neatly in the extracted piano suite and accompanying Thomas Guthrie's impeccable rendering of *Poor Jacob's* travails.

A mine of information throughout, the core of the book is Gál's diary, written in a lively and eminently readable style. He emerges as a likeable and immensely capable character, aware of his own mettle yet wearing it lightly, and quite free from pretensions of grandeur. That he could be rash or awkward is evident, too (May 15, August 13), and the author does not spare himself. Nor should we ignore this memoir of the 'matter which touches the good name of this country' (Sir John Anderson, Home Secretary in 1940). **Guy Rickards**

Classics RECONSIDERED



Critics **David Vickers** and **Lindsay Kemp** revisit Christopher Hogwood's classic recording of Handel's *Messiah*, now reissued in a limited-edition deluxe edition on Decca



HANDEL *Messiah*

Judith Nelson, Emma Kirkby *sops*

Carolyn Watkinson *contr* **Paul Elliott** *ten*

David Thomas *bass* **Christ Church Cathedral**

Choir, Oxford; Academy of Ancient Music / Christopher Hogwood

L'Oiseau Lyre © ③ (2 + 2) 478 8160

(Originally released as D189D3, 4/80)

Until now no one has recreated *Messiah* as Handel conceived it, a distinction that here falls to Christopher Hogwood. It's the first version that uses, as Handel always did, an all-male choir (boys and men) with women soloists; an orchestra of authentic

instruments; the correct numbers of singers and players for a true balance; and a text respecting Handel's ascertainable intentions.

Its impact is great and provokes me into reconsidering the kind of a work *Messiah* actually is. Vitality rather than solemnity strikes you as you listen to the overture: a quick tempo, sharp attack, and plenty of air between the notes. The string sound, without vibrato or silkiness, has the usual hint of Baroque edginess. The phrasing is never heavy and the orchestral attack often brilliant. The choruses gain greatly, too.

Not everything is perfect, however. The choir is good, but at certain moments the tenors falter, the altos' tone is imperfectly defined, or the trebles are not well focused, and there are marginally better chapel choirs. But the soloists give much pleasure – above all Judith Nelson – although listeners unfamiliar with 'authentic performance' may miss their lack of expressive vibrato.

Those who still hear *Messiah* as a grand, large-scale, uplifting experience will find it lightweight, perhaps perfunctory. But this, or something very close, is the work that Handel had in mind. **Stanley Sadie** (4/80)

David Vickers Nobody in their right mind doubts the seminal importance of Christopher Hogwood's groundbreaking *Messiah*. I'd stop short of saying it still ranks as the finest recording of the oratorio ever made because Handel's most popular masterpiece is blessed with an enormous and frequently excellent discography that grows year upon year. Nevertheless, it's fair to say that the alliance of the Academy of Ancient Music and the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, irrevocably revolutionised the way many of us hear and think about *Messiah* – even for those of us who didn't listen to Hogwood's recording until decades later. When it was originally issued on LP I was only five years old, and much too young and uninterested in such things. When I was at university my first historically informed experience of the oratorio was hearing Gardiner's pick-and-mix version (recorded two years after Hogwood's). Next, I invested in Pinnock's more recent star-studded recording, which touched me more profoundly in certain crucial moments. Then, in the late 1990s, I eventually discovered Hogwood's *Messiah*: it seemed

to blow cobwebs away from my ears and mind, as if I was grasping the most essential qualities of Handel's oratorio properly for the first time. I was astonished by its vitality, insightfulness, freely flowing pace, and the elegant radicalism of Hogwood's striving for a historically informed Handelian style. To my mind, it still has that immediacy and freshness today.

Lindsay Kemp How interesting that you should have found it revelatory *after* hearing those other period-instrument versions! I bought the original LP set when it first came out in the spring of 1980 (I still have it), and for me it was an awakening. I was a student, had just sung *Messiah* in a stodgy old university choral society performance, and with that blend of ignorance and arrogance students often have, blamed the piece for my lack of enthusiasm. Yet I'd developed a taste for the Vivaldi and Haydn recordings that the AAM and Christ Church had already done for L'Oiseau-Lyre (which Simon Preston had conducted), and, having heard on the radio the 'Hallelujah' chorus from their Prom performance the previous year, had already

noted that shedding a bit of the bombast had done nothing to dampen its uplifting effect. Listening to them in the whole piece now not only revealed what a long way period performance in Britain had come in less than 10 years, but also how fresh, thrilling and light-footed a piece *Messiah* could be. How natural this new performance style seemed, too! That free-flowing pace you mention came across as wholly unforced. For me, tempo was always one of the things Hogwood really got right about Handel.

DV I wholeheartedly agree! Hogwood's sense of musical pulse was often spot-on in his eclectic Handel recordings of the '80s. Some whimsical present-day interpreters superimpose their mercurial impulses audibly on musical pacing, but they would learn a lot from Hogwood's judicious flowing pace for slow arias and uncanny knack for making quick music lively without being abrasive. Also, the momentum of the joins between movements is often just right – there are no pregnant pauses during which we could imagine tumbleweed blowing across the nave of St Jude's.

Christopher Hogwood: always knew when to allow Handel's music to speak for itself



Handel's theatricality emerges without hindrance, and the producer deserves some credit for that too. Like you, I unfairly blamed Handel for why I found long stretches of the oratorio stodgy until some intellectual investment, time and maturity helped me to acquire a more holistic appreciation. The AAM's revolutionary *Messiah* seemed akin to a dirt-encrusted fresco being lovingly restored to its fantastic original colours, and it still retains an almost unique facility to grip me from beginning to end. It never has me itching to skip forward to the next popular bit (unlike some perfectly acceptable recordings I could mention). Moreover, the choice of five clean-voiced youthful soloists singing with disciplined (or minimal) vibrato, and applying tastefully stylish ornamentation, is also an enduring virtue of this *Messiah*.

LK Ah yes, the soloists. There seemed to be a firm idea of what an early music singer was back then, and these five were it. There was criticism of them at the time for being over-cool, but they had clearly been picked for their particular vocal qualities, not as stars who would help sell the record. I loved

the way they made themselves part of the music rather than becoming overbearing presences, and there were plenty of corners (often recitatives, interestingly enough) that were really made to count: David Thomas wafting shadowy mystery over 'For behold, darkness shall cover the earth', Paul Elliott's dejection and fragility at 'Thy rebuke hath broken his heart', Carolyn Watkinson's soft matronliness at 'For behold, a virgin shall conceive'. Judith Nelson was a singer of regal poise, and as for the young Emma Kirkby, the scintillating 'But who may abide' remains one of her great moments on record.

DV Kirkby's righteous fury in the soprano version of 'But who may abide' has its ideal counterpart in Judith Nelson's cathartic sincerity in 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'. Carolyn Watkinson's sensitively melodic 'He was despised' is a masterclass in the rhetorical power of sublime understatement – Hogwood always knew when Handel's music was beautiful enough to be allowed to speak for itself. There's explosive dynamism in David Thomas's forthright declamation of 'Why do the

nations', and his articulate 'The trumpet shall sound' (in dialogue with Michael Laird's natural trumpet) doesn't resort to the kind of stomping bluster to which some impetuous basses resort. I've always liked the unforced sweetness of Paul Elliott's way with 'Ev'ry valley', and his lightly madrigalian singing style was a much-needed rejection of the pompous Edwardian bellowers. The tidily precise and limpidly shaped phrasing of the soloists certainly matched the innovatively stylish playing of the AAM – reconstructing exactly the scale and constitution of Handel's large orchestra, and featuring a host of players who went on to achieve great things in their own right: Catherine Mackintosh, John Holloway, Roy Goodman and Monica Huggett are numbered among the 15 violinists; one of the harpsichordists was William Christie, and organist Simon Preston accompanied his Oxonian choristers.

LK That collegiate choir sound, popular in the 1970s as an alternative to the choral society, has rather passed out of the early music mainstream now that there are so many excellent professional chamber choirs around, but I must say it gives this performance much of its distinctive character, joy and 'authenticity'. The 'a' word really irritated people back then, and I can see why it has passed out of use. This recording is based on surviving parts and accounts from a performance Handel gave in the Foundling Hospital in London in 1754, featuring boys and men from the Chapel Royal, but there is a broader sense in which 'authentic' seems an apt word for it. To me it has always had a feeling of 'rightness' in its humility and clear-headed appreciation of what this marvellous piece really was before 200 years of 'tradition' bloated it, and not many performances have quite recaptured that since. Perhaps following Handel through every one of his 1754 decisions gave Hogwood a feeling of authority; it was another of his 'anti-maestro' strengths in the early days that he was absolutely prepared to execute what his studies told him was original performance practice, and then worry about how it sounded afterwards. Not everything worked (I still find it hard to live with 'incorrupt-*ib*-le' and that violent shortening of 'Why do the nations'), but many of the results turned out to make strong musical sense. This recording is not only one of the shining lights of 'historically informed performance', forcing us to rethink what we thought we knew and strewing new ideas in our path; it is also remains one of the most deeply convincing *Messiahs* we have. **G**

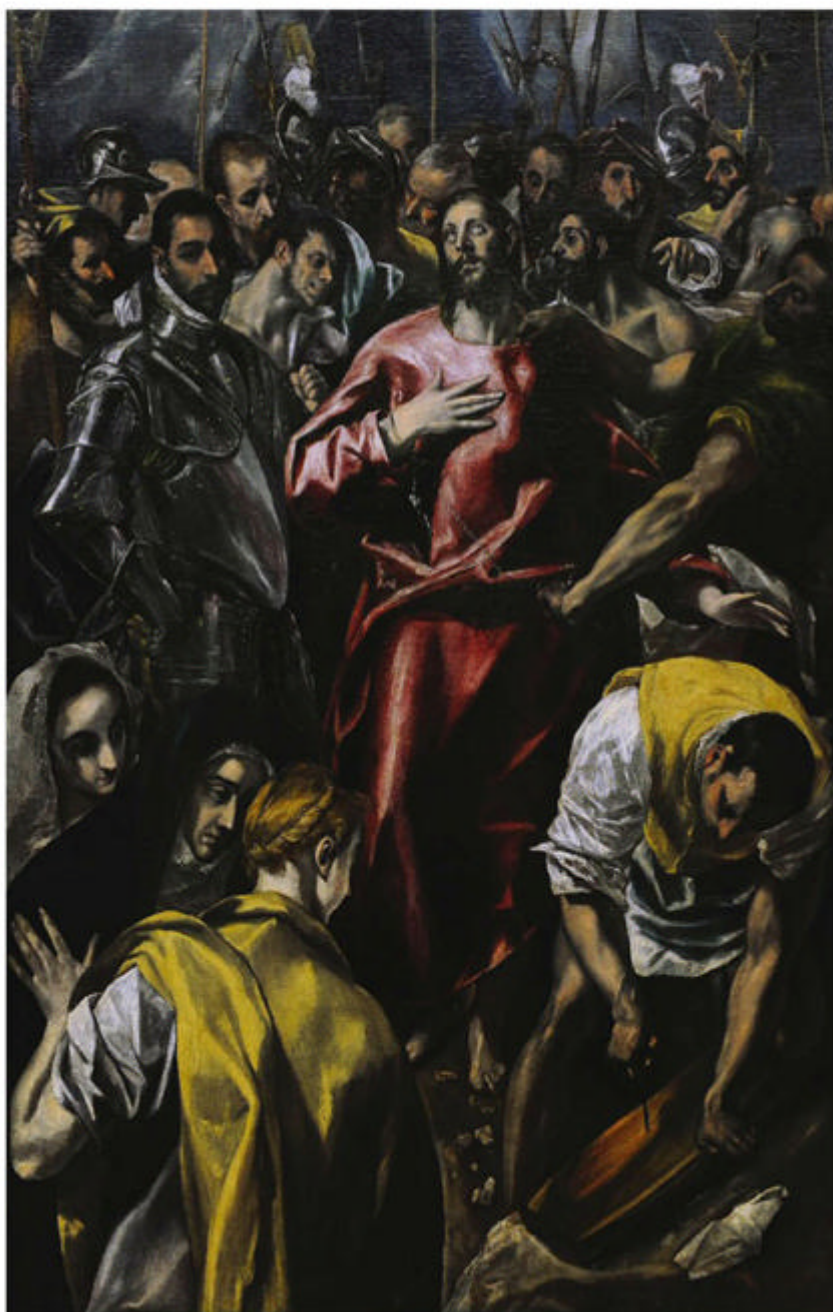
THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Music for Holy Week

Edward Breen draws on the vast musical repertoire associated with the week just before Easter, resulting in a fascinating and varied selection encompassing pieces by composers from Thomas Tallis to John Adams

Holy Week is the period from Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday spanning the seven days immediately before Easter Sunday. It is a time of penance for Christians who believe that the suffering and sacrifice of Christ and his subsequent Resurrection symbolise the hope that mankind will be redeemed from sin. In the Catholic liturgy, these events are expressed and commemorated through a complex, nuanced re-enactment and meditation for which there is a vast and fascinating musical repertoire, particularly so from the late medieval and Renaissance periods.

Despite liturgical revisions recommended by the Second Vatican Council (1960s), much early Latin repertoire for Holy Week is still heard in church services today. Furthermore, settings of the Passion story are an important part of Lutheran, Anglican and Catholic traditions as well as being performed in concert settings. The following selection, therefore, draws both on texts from the Catholic Holy Week liturgy and a wide range



The Disrobing of Christ (1577-79) – a painting by El Greco which hangs in the sacristy of Toledo Cathedral

of settings of the Passion story.

We begin with the *Stabat mater*, a Marian hymn depicting the mother of Christ standing, weeping at the foot of the Cross. The text contains an arresting shift of focus as the narrator ceases to observe and turns to address Mary directly. Next we focus on liturgical music for the triduum, a three-day period of intense devotion between Maundy Thursday and Holy Saturday: two settings of the famous *Miserere* text and two different sets of *Tenebrae* responsories, then the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah the prophet. 'Tenebrae' means darkness; it comprises morning offices traditionally performed on the evening of the preceding day. It has long captured the attention of historians and grand tourists alike for the dramatic symbolism of sequentially extinguished candles and the *strepitus*, a noisy outburst with various allegorical meanings. We end with Passion settings: from the Gospel of St Matthew, and three modern ones, including one from St John. ⑥



- 10 Vivaldi: *Stabat mater***
James Bowman *countertenor*
Academy of Ancient Music /
Christopher Hogwood
Decca (M) 414 3292 (2/77^R; 8/85)

Bowman and Hogwood were a key partnership in Baroque music performance, and this classic interpretation of Vivaldi's *Stabat mater*, dating from 1976, is as intense and immediate today as it ever was. Opting for an intimate and uncomplicated approach, Bowman draws the listener in to the text of this famous Catholic hymn. The climax, 'Eia, Mater', is perfectly poised as the strings play with spine-chilling simplicity to highlight the poem's direct address to Mary.



- 9 Allegri/Bai: *Miserere***
Ensemble William Byrd /
Graham O'Reilly
Naïve/Ambronay (F) E8846
Grand tourists queued for hours

to hear the papal choir sing the *Miserere* during Tenebrae. This disc offers the hybrid version by Tommaso Bai and Gregorio Allegri as preserved by a papal choirmaster in the 19th century. Not only is it an absolutely glistening performance with bright, unwavering high Cs and many of the famous *abbellimenti*, but also it's an exploration of the surprisingly ornate later stages of this long tradition. The disc also includes settings by Francesco Scarlatti and Leonardo Leo.



- 8 From Spain to Eternity: *The Sacred Polyphony of El Greco's Toledo***
Ensemble Plus Ultra

Archiv Produktion (F) 479 2610AH (8/14)
Based around Lobo's *Missa Prudentes virgines* this fine programme of Spanish Renaissance polyphony is best described as somewhere between transcendental and ethereal. With just one voice per part, Ensemble Plus Ultra create a rich, blended sound spiced with crystal clear diction. This disc is chosen for a wonderful performance of *Miserere mei, Deus* by Alonso de Tejada, showcasing these singers as leading lights.



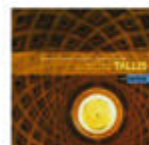
- 7 Gesualdo: *Tenebrae Responsories for Holy Saturday***
The Tallis Scholars /
Peter Phillips

Gimell (F) CDGIM015 (12/87)
John Milsom's endlessly repeatable quip from this very magazine, 'Is this great music, or is it merely weird?' was boldly emblazoned on The Tallis Scholars' own publicity for this album. The ensemble drew on the very best consort singers of their day, and their crystalline tone lends solemnity to the madrigalian gestures and harmonic twists of Gesualdo's style. The response 'O vos omnes' is the jewel in this crown.



- 6 Victoria: *Responsories for Tenebrae***
Westminster Cathedral Choir /
George Malcolm
Decca (F) 425 078 (5/60^R; 3/75^R)

This extraordinarily passionate recording (1959) still has strong atmospheric impact. Sessions were held while the building was open to the public, and careful listening reveals sounds of cathedral life, creating an aural soundscape so evocative of mid-20th-century Catholicism that one can't help but feel transported. The singing is somewhat 'gutsy' by modern polyphonic standards. Listen out for the hair-raising conviction of the choirboy soloist in the verse 'Judas mercator'.



- 5 Tallis: *Gaude gloriosa Dei mater, Lamentations I & II***
Taverner Choir and Consort /
Andrew Parrott

Virgin Veritas (S) ② 562230-2 (5/89^R)
Thankfully, this set is once again widely available. Cited by Andrew Carwood as an important influence on his own musical development, it is warmly phrased and deserves repeated listening. Parrott's preoccupation with the potential non-existence of the historical countertenor leads to a performance of the first set of Tallis's *Lamentations* of Jeremiah topped by high tenors. The resulting texture is rich, oaken and wonderfully intimate.



- 4 Bach: *St Matthew Passion***
Soloists; Philharmonia Choir
and Orchestra / Otto Klemperer
EMI (S) ③ 567 5382 (4/62^R)

For those of us long bewitched by the superb recordings of Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Klemperer's Bach makes unexpected demands on the listener. The sheer slowness of this recording can be as overwhelming as the work's message, but as is so often the case with Bach, one finds that different approaches enhance understanding. Of particular note is Peter Pears's poignant Evangelist, a stark reminder that we ignore older recordings in outmoded styles at our peril.



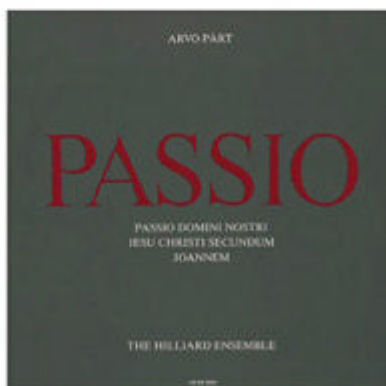
- 3 John Adams: *The Gospel According to the Other Mary***
Soloists; LA Master Chorale,
LAPO / Gustavo Dudamel

DG (M) ② 479 2243GH2 (4/14)
John Adams has skillfully synthesised 20th-century styles in this Passion oratorio, a collaboration with director and librettist Peter Sellars. Dudamel leads a strong cast through impassioned modern texts that reframe the Gospel story while a countertenor trio functions as a calmly shimmering Evangelist. Adams's filmic sense of place is particularly vivid in his depiction of Golgotha. All wonderfully captured by Dudamel and his team.



- 2 Leighton: *Crucifixus pro nobis***
Neil Mackie *ten* St Paul's
Cathedral Choir / John Scott
Helios (B) CDH55195 (12/92^R)

This album is a superb account of Kenneth Leighton's choral music, greatly enhanced by the cavernous acoustic of St Paul's. *Crucifixus pro nobis* (1961) is a 20-minute cantata in which the last movement, a setting of Phineas Fletcher's *Drop, drop, slow tears*, receives the quintessential British cathedral sound. Scott takes a deliciously slow tempo, allowing the exquisite harmonies time to breathe as they float upwards in hopeful anticipation of the Resurrection.



1 Arvo Pärt: *Passio*

The Hilliard Ensemble / Paul Hillier ECM New Series (F) 837 1092 (2/89^R)

Here, The Hilliards and Arvo Pärt proceeded first to capture and then to bottle the zeitgeist. Remarkable for the synchronicity of vision between the warm telepathy of The Hilliard sound, the uncluttered repetitions of Pärt's music and the elegant simplicity of ECM's sleeve design, it ushered in the 1990s with a magical fusion of sacred music and Conran Shop aesthetic.

Time seems to stand still as The Hilliards and their shadow-instruments allow Pärt's mystical tintinnabulations to unfold. The wind howling around St Jude-on-the-Hill lends an extramusical dimension to the bleakness of Good Friday.

To explore recordings from Edward Breen's Specialist's Guide, courtesy of Qobuz, please visit gramophone.co.uk/specialistsguide

qobuz

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

A tricky mix of irony and sincerity

Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, his final collaboration with Da Ponte, is an elaborate opera buffa with a multiplicity of layers. **Mike Ashman's** survey of the many and varied recordings yields surprising results

C*osì fan tutte* ('All women act like that') is now flourishing in the world's operatic repertoire. But it had to survive the myth of early failure and the fact that Lorenzo Da Ponte's libretto (an original – a rare touch for that time in theatre) boasted a tricky mix of irony and sincerity (sometimes both in operation at the same time) – a parallel to English writers such as Laurence Sterne and Jane Austen – and a wickedly dry wit castigating both male and female lovers.

Mozart bought into this challenge with gusto, whereas Salieri, the project's first intended composer, simply had not. Compare the latter's strait-laced setting of the opening 'La mia Dorabella' trio with the version by Mozart, who relished saying several things at once in both orchestra and voices. Look at Don Alfonso's first (mini) aria, 'Vorrei dir e cor non ho', where he sets up the plot for the sisters – it could so easily be the tragedy suggested by its orchestration, but the vocal line and its performance tell us that it's faked grief.

In a *Gramophone* blog in 2012, the conductor Thomas Kemp wrote: 'The idea of irony in music was new in the 18th century. *Così* displays this on many levels and has rarely been appreciated for this... One area that is often overlooked is to phrase off the cadences so that the music does not become stodgy with over-emphasised bar lines. There needs to be a sense of dialogue between stage and pit – *Così* is chamber music with instruments and singers acting and reacting to each other. Also, Mozart is not just

about melody – it is often the accompaniment or the middle ground that provides the characterisation, the second violins, the violas (which are often *divisi* like in a string quintet), second trumpet, second clarinet, second horn, timpani.'

A PRE-1980S MIXED BAG

Fritz Busch's conducting at the birth of Glyndebourne in 1934/35 feels today – in Naxos's alert transfer – like the first-ever performance of Mozart's third and final collaboration with Lorenzo Da Ponte. Busch doesn't hang around, but nor does he gabble. Right from the start he's funny where he should be – and the first trio has immediately that attention to phrase-lengths and cut-offs that makes his Mozart sound so modernly historically aware. He's serious and ruminative without a hint of romantic indulgence in Act 2 when the lovers are wounded by what they're bringing on themselves. There are insights here which seem authentic but have been lost since – for example, the sisters in their first duet ('Ah guarda sorella') are actually in competition about their lovers, a parallel to the opening men's scene.

That said, the cast is a little less heaven-sent than those of the other early Glyndebourne Da Ponte operas, though Willi Domgraf-Fassbänder (father of Brigitte Fassbaender) as Guglielmo has a wonderful knack of sounding like he's inventing the words he sings; Heddle Nash's rather English Ferrando brings passion to a role perhaps not naturally his; and Irene Eisinger (captioned by a French



reviewer as 'très, très soubrette') is an undeniably cute Despina. Even if the sisters tend to the 'operatic', Ina Souez is at least aware that there are elements of self-parody in 'Come scoglio'. Start with Busch, hear all your more modern choices, then find Busch again – still just as refreshing.

The first of no fewer than 12 traceable **Karl Böhm** recordings was made in Geneva in January 1949. It's an under-rehearsed but spirited live affair with colourful (and widely contrasted) sisters in Suzanne Danco and Giulietta Simionato and a characteristic Italian Alfonso in Toscanini's one-time Falstaff Mariano Stabile (every joke and point underlined, and the maestro's tempos deliberately slowed, and accented, to achieve this). But most interesting is the comic-bordering-



Wickedly dry wit: Mozart's *Così*, here staged at Glyndebourne in 2006 by Nicholas Hytner and starring (from L-R) Topi Lehtipuu as Ferrando, Anke Vondung as Dorabella, Nicolas Rivenq as Don Alfonso, Miah Persson as Fiordiligi and Luca Pisaroni as Guglielmo

on-*buffo* style of the Swiss performance (exaggerated sobbing from the sisters not excluded), a pointer back to the European view of *Così* as a drawing-room farce during the first century-and-a-half of its existence.

Böhm's most hailed (and least cut) attempt of the opera on record was in 1962 in London for producer Walter Legge. Yet sisters Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Christa Ludwig often sound too grand to be young Ferrarese chicks on the make. Try Ludwig's 'Smanie implacabili' and 'È amore un ladroncello' – a Marschallin in Octavian's colours. The pair also react to Despina (the light-sounding Hanny Steffek – interestingly, Mozart originally had cast his Cherubino in the role) introducing the disguised 'Albanians'

as if she'd shown the dustmen into the parlour. Legge's (and now Böhm's) over-serious approach to the piece avoids *buffo* like the plague but offers no credible alternative reading. Walter Berry's Alfonso, the spokesman in the opera for Da Ponte's own ironic, cynical philosophy, is just a rather neutral old man. Alfredo Kraus sings Ferrando beautifully, but it's like 19th-century Italian opera with the brakes on. For 2015, despite the old-style class of the playing and singing, too much is politely beautiful, without humour, let alone irony.

Legge's first recording of the opera was with **Herbert von Karajan** and the Philharmonia Orchestra in 1954 for Columbia. Here, in Fiordiligi's two big arias 'Come scoglio' and 'Per pietà',

Schwarzkopf is significantly younger-sounding (though still too unfeminine) than she is for Böhm in 1962, and she meshes well with Nan Merriman's dark (but never over-rich) Dorabella and Léopold Simoneau's impeccable old-school-of-Mozart-tenor Ferrando. Unlike on Böhm's 1962 recording, these sisters do sound as if they're choosing lovers (rather than desserts) in Act 2 ('Prenderò quel brunettino'). Lisa Otto, a Minnie Mouse of a Despina, is a clear aural contrast to her mistresses and acceptably cute when undisguised; her doctor and notary are a bit too cartoon-like for repeated listening. Sesto Bruscantini shows off well-controlled *italianità* as Alfonso. But Karajan delivers a performance that, although beautifully micro-managed, has little to do with the



Rosa Mannion as Dorabella and Amanda Roocroft as Fiordiligi for Sir John Eliot Gardiner in 1992

emotional drama of the piece, let alone its irony or humour.

Guido Cantelli's live performance in 1956 shows off a lustrous Italian chamber sound for an *après* Karajan/Legge cast (same sisters and Guglielmo, and a future Ferrando in Luigi Alva). Schwarzkopf enjoys the freedom Cantelli gives her, and at last sounds girlish in 'Per pietà'. Graziella Sciutti manages to act out the role of Despina completely in character while maintaining absolute vocal taste. There's abundant wit here but no caricature of the slightest degree, even for the doctor and notary. This performance deserves a proper transfer.

The earlier of **Sir Georg Solti's** Decca recordings is exceptionally well cast in terms of both vocal demands and character. Underrated Pilar Lorengar is stylish and secure as Fiordiligi (a fearless 'Come scoglio'), Teresa Berganza an uncaricatured and sensual Dorabella and Ryland Davies a passionate, risky Ferrando. Gabriel Bacquier is a rarely probing and dangerous Alfonso and Jane Berbié a natural charlady Despina. Jeffrey Tate is the stage-drama-aware harpsichordist. Solti always has a reason here for pushing hard, and this remains an exciting dark horse in the field.

HISTORIC CHOICE

Fritz Busch

Naxos mono © ② 8 110280/81

Because Busch understands the piece so well, all the to-be-discovered colours and controversies of the work are present in this Glyndebourne premiere. The number of cuts – traditional at the time – do not interfere with this impact.



The balance (forward winds and brass) and phrasing (nothing sustained or slushy) of **Otto Klemperer's** orchestral contribution (1971) indicate a conductor with an understanding of Mozartian sound which is often lost before the 1980s. (Only the unrelated plink-plonk continuo doesn't fit the bill.) Tempos *are* slow, but Klemperer contrasts and uses them with intent. Take as an example 'Smanie implacabili' – maybe not one of the set's obvious successes and surely difficult for Yvonne Minton's Dorabella, but few other conductors before the 'moderns' render the agitated rhythm of the accompaniment's tormenting Furies so convincingly. Klemperer also fought to have the young Margaret Price as his Fiordiligi – a triumph. Lucia Popp is a cheeky and uncliché Despina to set alongside her and dependable soldiers/lovers Alva (again) and Geraint Evans. Only Hans Sotin's straightness – no demerit in itself – as Alfonso is too bar-by-bar to engage consistently as a reading of the part.

REVOLUTIONARY READINGS

A revolution in hearing *Così* started in 1984 with **Arnold Östman's** L'Oiseau-Lyre recording, the cast a slightly more

international version of the productions he was conducting at the time with Drottningholm's period-instrument orchestra. Suddenly the 19th/20th-century varnish was gone. Most other performances simply began to sound too slow: owing to the articulation available on old instrument copies, practically every tempo was faster than listeners had become accustomed to. Appoggiaturas were suddenly everywhere in a contemporary Mozart performance; and, even if they did not offer quite the 19th-century-shaped virtuosity available on many other recordings, the voices were light, flexible and handled by Östman with period style. Rachel Yakar, for example, delivered 'Come scoglio' with ample strength and dexterous passagework, while Georgine Resick's Despina was light, spirited and unexaggerated. Alfonso was the veteran Carlos Feller, most attentive to comedy (and irony), and the experienced soldiers/lovers Tom Krause and Gösta Winbergh were in good voice for this novel context. The Drottningholm orchestra showed off pure rounded wind chords, a warm and clean string tone and prominent trumpets and drums. Finally, woodwind phrases actually could be heard commenting on what was being sung or acted. The opera was given complete, including 'Al fato dan legge' (Act 1) and all three Ferrando arias, and the display aria for Guglielmo as an appendix. The recording had an enormous impact, surprising many who hadn't cared for period instruments.

Although released some seven years later, **Nikolaus Harnoncourt's** first studio recording of *Così* used the modern instruments of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, except for natural horns and trumpets. He did, however, have his players adopt a string tone almost devoid of vibrato and make the wind prominent and woody-sounding, and the brass roar. Verbal clarity, lively phrasing and sharp accents were the order of the day, as were harpsichord and cello (rather than fortepiano) in recitatives. It was quite a large-scale sound, but the hall's acoustic

DVD CHOICE

Sylvain Cambreling

C Major © ② DVD 714508



This is an 'interpretation', certainly, and not for non-period haters. But Haneke's production is so good to look at and to hear, and is dramatically tense enough to encourage multiple viewings.

REVOLUTIONARY CHOICE

Arnold Östman

Decca © ⑩ D 470 8602

Period instruments are used, but in relatively early days for opera. Östman's terrifyingly fast tempos and grasp of style in 1984 made this a major breakthrough not only for the work but also for the ethos of historically informed performance.



let everything tell. Dramaturgically, it felt as if the opera had been thought in long scenes, rather than in separate individual numbers. Often unconventional tempos were motivated by drama and character ('Di scrivermi', 'Il core vi dono' and 'Non siate ritrosi' slow; 'Soave sia il vento' quite brisk).

The casting, too, was individual. Thomas Hampson got Alfonso – although young-sounding, he was completely involved; and Anna Steiger, a character singer writ large, was Despina – not always comfortably. This second 'modern' recording of *Così* was like Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: dark and weird behind all the dressing up; and it positively enjoyed the multiple resonances (serious or comic) of libretto and setting that had so confused the likes of Beethoven (who thought the libretto 'immoral'), Wagner (who called it 'trivial') and Sir Thomas Beecham (who described the opera as 'a long summer day spent in a cloudless land by a southern sea').

On Sir John Eliot Gardiner's journey through the mature Mozart operas, consideration was given to Mozart's suggestion that the sisters were in many ways (including musically) interchangeable. Dorabella was cast as a soprano (Rosa Mannion, colourful and up for a laugh) instead of the mezzo that long had become standard practice, and she even took some phrases over from Amanda Roocroft's bright, forward Fiordiligi in 'Come scoglio'. The effect – with Rainer Trost's elegant Ferrando, Eirian James's spirited and charming (but never plain silly) Despina and (on the CDs) Carlos Feller's dramatic Alfonso – was of light comedy without farce.

Despite the period instruments, this is fairly traditional-sounding Mozart, with an open-minded use of appoggiaturas, some quite generous *rubato* and deliberate highlighting of interesting orchestral parts. Gardiner seems determined to make the end of Act 2 into a serious finale with steady pacing and (starting with the canon toast) equal emphasis on the non-humorous side of the action. Even the self-revelations of the soldiers as 'Albanians' and the exposing of Despina as doctor are played vocally straight. This approach puts 'Idol mio, se questo è vero' into the position of a Beethovenian hymnlike farewell. The DVD preserves a straightforward picture-book production (credited to the conductor himself) with 18th-century-style coastal views, domestic settings and costumes.

Sir Charles Mackerras's first *Così* – with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and an interesting Fiordiligi from Felicity Lott – has disappeared from view, though it's

still available. For his second recording, he moved to the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, opting to use a mothballed Victorian English translation by Marmaduke E Browne. In playing terms, however, this is on a par with the finest period-instrument versions. The cast is dominated by the men: Thomas Allen is an experienced and crafty Alfonso, Christopher Maltman is a confident, definite Guglielmo and Toby Spence is superb in Ferrando's 'Tradito, schernito'. Among the women, Diana Montague gives Dorabella many levels of character.

REVELATIONS

Singer-turned-conductor René Jacobs made the next revolutionary sound recording after the Östman. Fast music is very fast and the slow music slow. Sometimes

these are unconventionally combined, for example in 'Sento, oh Dio' in which the men's excuses are contrasted strongly for speed with the girls' pleas. The recitatives are enlivened by fortepiano playing (by Nicolau de Figueirdo) of nigh on manic invention. The orchestral strength is based on the original Vienna performances: the first violins are not allowed to dominate, and the trumpets and other winds are well forward. The cast is Jacobs's normal energetic mixture in such repertoire of the experienced and the virtually novice. The greatly contrasted sisters are Véronique Gens and Bernarda Fink. Pietro Spagnoli's Alfonso sounds like a light baritone, therefore accommodating the role's tessitura above Marcel Boone's inventive Guglielmo. Werner Güra is a beautifully even Ferrando. But the main focus of this

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1934/35 Souez ^f , Helletsberger ^o , Brownlee ^a , Nash ^{fe} , Domgraf-Fassbänder ^o , Eisinger ^{de} , Glyndebourne Opera / Busch Naxos (S) (2) 8 110280/81 (5/36, 8/04)	
1949 Danco ^f , Simionato ^o , Stabile ^a , De Luca ^{fe} , Cortis ^o , Morel ^{de} ; Suisse Romande Orch / Böhm Walhall (S) (2) WLCD0067	
1954 Schwarzkopff ^f , Merriman ^o , Bruscantini ^a , Simoneau ^{fe} , Panerai ^o , Otto ^{de} ; Philh / Karajan EMI (B) (3) 948245-2 (9/55 ^o); Naxos (S) (3) 8 111232/4; Regis (S) (3) RRC3010; United Classics (S) (3) T2CD2012033	
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1962 Schwarzkopff ^f , Ludwig ^o , Berry ^a , Kraus ^{fe} , Taddei ^o , Steffek ^{de} ; Philh / Böhm EMI (B) (3) 966785-2 (5/63, 11/00 ^o)	
1971 M Price ^f , Minton ^o , Sotin ^a , Alva ^{fe} , Evans ^o , Popp ^{de} , New Philh / Klemperer EMI (B) (3) 559852-2	
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1990 Larson ^f , Felty ^o , Sylvan ^a , Kelley ^{fe} , Maddalena ^o , Kuzma ^{de} ; Vienna SO / Smith Decca (F) (2) DVD 071 4139 (12/05 - nla)	
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1992 Roocroft ^f , Mannion ^o , Feller ^a , Trost ^{fe} , Gilfrý ^o , James ^{de} ; EBS / Gardiner Archiv Produktion (S) (3) (B) 437 829-2AH3 (2/94)	
1992 Roocroft ^f , Mannion ^o , Nicolai ^a , Trost ^{fe} , Gilfrý ^o , James ^{de} ; EBS / Gardiner Archiv Produktion (F) (2) DVD 073 026-9AH2	
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1998 Gens ^f , Fink ^o , Spagnoli ^a , Güra ^{fe} , Boone ^o , Oddone ^{de} ; Concerto Köln / Jacobs Harmonia Mundi (M) (3) HMC90 1663/5 (5/99)	
2005 Walff ^f , Garanča ^o , Raimondi ^a , Mathey ^{fe} , Degout ^o , Bonney ^{de} ; Mahler CO / Harding Virgin Classics (B) (2) DVD 344716-9 (12/06)	
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2013 Kernes ^f , Ernman ^o , Wolff ^a , Tarver ^{fe} , Maltman ^o , Kastyan ^{de} ; MusicAeterna / Currentzis Sony Classical (F) (3) 88765 46616-2 (2/15)	

Key: ^fFiordiligi ^oDorabella ^aDon Alfonso, ^{fe}Ferrando, ^oGuglielmo, ^{de}Despina

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GRAMOPHONE APRIL 2015 131

PLAYLISTS

Explore music via our themed listening suggestions – and why not create your own too?

The music of Romania's greatest musician, an intriguing (mainly) French programme from recorder player Erik Bosgraaf, and a Russian Romantic are in the listening mix this month. As always, check out the music at gramophone.co.uk/playlists and have a go yourself!

Orchestral Enescu

Richard Whitehouse chooses 10 pieces from the orchestral output of the Romanian polymath George Enescu

A prodigy on the violin, George Enescu (the 60th anniversary of whose death falls this May) was hardly less precocious as a composer. It is worth recalling the words of Yehudi Menuhin (Enescu's most illustrious pupil) who considered that the Romanian's mature music would not really be understood prior to the 21st century.

First heard in Bucharest, the *Romanian Poem* (1897) bracingly contrasts the inward and festive sides of the national character in what is a deceptively rhapsodic two-part tone-poem. Coming 75 years after Mendelssohn's work, the Octet for strings (1900) took formal ingenuity and contrapuntal dexterity to a new level, its four movements rising to a climax of dizzying complexity and emotional abandon. The worldwide success of his *First Romanian Rhapsody* has always overshadowed that of the Second (1902), although while this latter piece may lack its predecessor's sheer exhilaration, its melodic potency and unforced pathos are its own justification.

Mahler wasn't the only conductor of renown to champion the First Orchestral Suite (1903), doubtless impressed by its 'Prélude à l'unisson'. Among the most-played orchestral works of its era, the First Symphony (1905) finds Enescu at his most engaging and communicative. His Third Symphony (1918) – which received its London premiere as recently as this February – is a vast (in scope if not in size) contemplation of the human spirit. At its centre is a scherzo whose glancing irony is blown aside by a peroration of immense import.

Enescu was never to hear *Vox Maris* (c1929), yet its unique fusion of formal intricacy and expressive evocation takes his musical idiom to a new level of tonal



As a composer-instrumentalist, Enescu's influence on 20th-century music cannot be exaggerated

subtlety and refinement equalled by few and surpassed by none. One of Enescu's greatest later successes, the Third Orchestral Suite (1938) centres on a lengthy depiction of landscape whose tangible detail is no less remarkable than the formal precision and fluidity that makes it all possible.

Realised from the composer's detailed draft by Pascal Bentoiu, the Fifth Symphony (c1941) finds Enescu transcending the horrors of war in a personal requiem.

Enescu was all but on his deathbed when he finished his Chamber Symphony (1954), yet this compressed focusing on formal and expressive essentials finds his powers intact.

- **Romanian Poem**
Bucharest Philh Ch and Orch / Cristian Mandeal
Arte Nova
- **Octet**
Kremerata Baltica / Gidon Kremer
Noneusch
- **Romanian Rhapsody No 2**
BBC PO / Gennadi Rozhdestvensky
Chandos
- **Orchestral Suite No 1**
Romanian Radio and TV Orch / Iosif Conta
Marco Polo

- **Symphony No 1**
BBC PO / Gennadi Rozhdestvensky
Chandos
- **Symphony No 3**
Orch National de Lyon / Lawrence Foster
EMI / Warner Classics
- **Vox Maris**
Florin Diaconescu; Bucharest Ch and PO / Cristian Mandeal
Arte Nova
- **Orchestral Suite No 3**
BBC PO / Gennadi Rozhdestvensky
Chandos
- **Symphony No 5**
Marius Vlad; NDR Chor; Deutsche Radio Philharmonie / Peter Ruzicka
CPO
- **Chamber Symphony**
Tampere PO / Hannu Lintu
Ondine Classical

A French line to Boulez

Recorder player Erik Bosgraaf offers a playlist that combines two complementary strands

I've followed two threads for my playlist. Firstly, I wanted to follow a completely personal and hypothetical line of French music preceding Pierre Boulez (whose music I've just recorded for Brilliant Classics), and secondly, I was keen to present a collection of music for a solo instrument. The French line starts, in chronological order, with a work by one of the greatest 18th-century composers, François Couperin; his eye for detail in fine ornamentation is never allowed to intrude on a lush sound. Boulez's *Dialogue de l'ombre double* was written for Berio and uses piano reverb, just like the dedicatee's *Sequenza* for trumpet solo (which appears later in my playlist). Then there's Debussy's *Syrinx* for flute solo, followed by the clarinet solo from *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* and a short monophonic movement from *Les corps glorieux* – both by Messiaen; the composer, who taught Boulez, plays organ in the latter recording. *Vortex temporum* is by Gérard Grisey, a composer who died far too young to continue the French tradition.

Boulez as a conductor should not be omitted; he makes an appearance in the introduction to *The Miraculous Mandarin*. The solo thread is continued by improvising saxophonist Steve Lacy, as

well as a small piece by Jacob van Eyck, who has single-handedly produced the largest collection of solo wind music in Western history.

- **F Couperin** Leçons de ténèbre - Aleph
Christophe Rousset *hpd*
Decca
- **Boulez** Dialogue de l'ombre double
Erik Bosgraaf *rec*
Brilliant Classics
- **Debussy** Syrinx
Philippe Bernold *fl*
Harmonia Mundi
- **Messiaen** Quatuor pour la fin du temps - Abîme des oiseaux
Alain Damiens *cl et al*
Decca
- **Messiaen** Le corps glorieux - I subtilité des corps glorieux
Olivier Messiaen *org*
EMI
- **Grisey** Vortex Temporum II
Tito Ceccherini *pf*
Stradivarius
- **Berio** Sequenza X
Ensemble Intercontemporain
DG
- **Bartók** The Miraculous Mandarin - Vorspiel
New York PO / Pierre Boulez
Sony Classical
- **Lacy** November - The Crust
Steve Lacy *sax*
Intakt Records
- **Van Eyck** Comagin
Erik Bosgraaf *rec*
Brilliant Classics

Alexander Glazunov

Andrew Mellor on a Russian master in the 150th anniversary of his birth

If you're happy to enjoy music from times past without any thought to whether that music served an advancing or innovative purpose, the works of Alexander Glazunov are a tonic. Less concerned than his predecessors with discovering something inherently 'Russian' in his music, Glazunov wrote with what might be described as a light Russian accent, bestowed upon music that, at its best, has something of the weave of Brahms and the fluidity of Liszt. Unsurprisingly, he was considered well placed to instruct youths in the craft of composition and musicianship as Director of St Petersburg Conservatoire.

What you almost always get from Glazunov is an embracing sense of warmth – from the bottom-up, fur-wrapped emergence of the opening pages of the Fourth Symphony to the lyrical thread of the Violin Concerto, which also tunnels upwards from the depths (opening on the soloist's lowest string). Rarely, if ever, do you doubt Glazunov's mastery of his craft; frequently he seems to do more with it than most of his contemporaries. John Ogdon championed the First Piano Concerto and his love shines through a performance full of fizz and bite recorded for EMI. Today's emphasis on rather cleaner recording techniques only serves to clarify Glazunov's delicate constructions, particularly in the most recent symphony (and concerto) cycle from José Serebrier.



Glazunov: a sadly neglected Russian Romantic

- **Symphony No 4**
RSNO / José Serebrier
Warner Classics
- **Violin Concerto**
Vadim Gluzman *vn* Bergen PO / Litton
BIS
- **Piano Concerto No 1**
John Ogdon *pf* Bournemouth SO /
Paavo Berglund
EMI
- **Symphony No 8**
BBC NOW / Tadaaki Otaka
BIS
- **String Quartet No 3**
Utrecht Quartet
MDG
- **The Seasons**
Slovak RSO / Ondrej Lenárd
Amadis
- **Oriental Rhapsody**
USSR State Academic SO /
Evgeny Svetlanov
Melodiya
- **Elegy, Op 44**
Gérard Caussé *va* Brigitte Engerer *pf*
Mirare
- **Four Preludes and Fugues**
Tatjana Franova *pf*
Marco Polo
- **Chant du ménestrel, Op 71**
Shauna Rolston *vc* Calgary PO /
Mario Bernardi
CBC Records

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Erik Bosgraaf: flamboyant recorder soloist and ardent champion of Boulez – and French music in general



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PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* from Vienna, 'Cav and Pag' from the Met, Ravel and Rachmaninov at Bridgewater Hall, and Haitink in Boston – all available to audiences around the world

Tokyo's Bunka Kaikan Recital Hall & online

First-ever concert to be streamed in beyond-DSD quality, April 5

This marathon nine-hour programme, titled 'Music from the Classical Period – Musicians in Vienna, a Music Capital', is notable for the fact that it will be the first concert ever to be streamed in DSD5.6MHz high-resolution. According to the DSD Live Streaming project, which is presenting the stream: 'DSD 5.6 MHz is a system for converting audio between the analogue and digital domains with extremely high fidelity, faithfully reproducing the sound of the original source material. The audio signals are represented by an enormous amount of digital data, with a sampling rate 128 times that of CDs.' To enjoy the stream, users will need the free software available from the DSD Live Streaming website and a suitable USB DAC to connect their computer to headphones or their audio system.

dsd.st

Berlin Philharmonie & Digital Concert Hall

Sir Simon Rattle conducts *La damnation de Faust*, April 11

Following performances at the Baden-Baden Easter Festival, and one the previous evening (also at the Philharmonie), Sir Simon Rattle conducts a starry line-up in Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust* that can also be watched live via the Digital Concert Hall and thereafter in its archive. Charles Castronovo sings Faust; a former *Gramophone* Artist of the Year, Joyce DiDonato, is Marguerite; Ludovic Tézier is Méphistophélès; and Florian Boesch sings Brander. Simon Halsey's Rundfunkchor Berlin fulfils the role of the chorus, performing alongside the Berlin Philharmonic.

berliner-philharmoniker.de;
digitalconcerthall.com

Vienna State Opera & streamed to your Smart TV or computer

Adam Fischer conducts Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, April 12

Strauss's baronial comedy of manners comes to Vienna State Opera, starring Martina Serafin as the Marschallin, Wolfgang Bankl as Baron Ochs, Elina Garanča as Octavian and Erin Morley as Sophie. Adam Fischer conducts this Otto Schenk-directed production, which is streamed live to your Smart TV or computer. Single tickets cost €14 each while a Smart Live ticket, for eight operas, is available for €88. Free trials of the service are also available.

staatsoperlive.com

EVENT OF THE MONTH

Meta4 bring Haydn and Schumann to Wigmore Hall



London's Wigmore Hall, BBC Radio 3 & online

Lunchtime concerts by Meta4, Bezuidenhout, Persson and Tamestit, April 6, 13, 20 & 27

Broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and throughout the world via the internet, the weekly Monday lunchtime concerts at Wigmore Hall feature international artists as well as emerging performers from the BBC New Generation Artists scheme. This month, hear Meta4 play quartets by Haydn and Schumann on April 6; enjoy a Mozart performance from fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout on April 13; catch soprano Miah Persson singing Handel, Spohr, Waxman and Richard Strauss alongside violinist Birgit Kolar and pianist Malcolm Martineau on April 20; and savour viola player Antoine Tamestit performing solo sonatas by Bach and Hindemith on April 27.

wigmore-hall.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Tonhalle & SRF 2

Haas's *Concerto Grosso No 1* for four alphas and orchestra, April 23

The world premiere of this unusual work, composed by leading Austrian composer Georg Friedrich Haas, was given in Munich last year by the Hornroh Modern Alphorn Quartet and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under Susanna Mälkki. Just over a year later, the same quartet – but this time with the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich under Kent Nagano – brings the Alpine landscape-infused work for Alpine horn quartet to Zurich. The evening concludes with a performance of Bruckner's Sixth Symphony. You can catch the concert live on Swiss radio station SRF 2.

tonhalle-orchester.ch; srf.ch

New York's Metropolitan Opera & cinemas worldwide

Marcelo Álvarez makes his Met debut in 'Cav and Pag', April 25

David McVicar directs tenor Marcelo Álvarez as the unrepentant seducer Turiddu and the clown Canio in the first new Met production of the double-bill, Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* and Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, in 45 years. Also starring are Eva-Maria Westbroek as Santuzza (*Cavalleria*) and Patricia Racette as Nedda (*Pagliacci*). The Met's Principal Conductor Fabio Luisi leads both operas, which can be enjoyed live in cinemas across the world.

metopera.org

Manchester's Bridgewater Hall & BBC Radio 3

Four pianists perform works by Ravel and Rachmaninov, April 24

Part of a series exploring the piano music of Ravel and Rachmaninov, this concert features pianists Noriko Ogawa, Martin Roscoe, Kathryn Stott and Peter Donohoe – all much-loved by Manchester audiences. On the programme is Ravel's Piano Concerto in G and Piano Concerto in D for the Left Hand, and Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 4 and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. As well as thrilling, virtuosic piano music – all accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic under Andrew Gourlay – the Bridgewater Hall audience can enjoy a preview talk with Noriko Ogawa and Peter Donohoe.

bbc.co.uk/philharmonic; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Boston's Symphony Hall, WGBH radio & online

Haitink conducts the BSO in Ravel, Adès and Mozart, April 25 & May 4

The Boston Symphony Orchestra's Conductor Emeritus Bernard Haitink leads the orchestra in Ravel's *Mother Goose* and Piano Concerto in G, with Jean-Yves Thibaudet as the soloist. Also on the programme is Thomas Adès's *Three Studies from Couperin*, and Mozart's Symphony No 36, the *Linz*. As with all Saturday evening concerts by the BSO, this is broadcast live, both on radio and online, with encore broadcasts on Mondays, all with host, Boston area radio personality Ron Della Chiesa.

bso.org; wgbh.org



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This month a new name arrives in multiroom. Denon takes its headphone amplifier/DAC out and about, and hope in Japan

Andrew Everard
Audio Editor

MONTH TEST DISCS



Another one of 2L's exemplary choral/orchestral recordings, and available in formats from MP3 to DSD: a captivating set of unfamiliar works



Making its debut on the Resonus Classics label, Concentus VII delivers a beautifully vibrant set of cantatas and sonatas by Baroque composers

From polished Gold to Statement cables

The latest arrivals from the big audio names have something for everyone



Monitor Audio's Gold series of speakers **1** has built a strong reputation over the past decade, and the latest version claims 'greater transparency, consistency and visual sophistication'.

A new version of the company's ribbon treble driver is fitted: produced to tighter tolerances and closely pair-matched, it plays a major part in that enhanced transparency, the company says. It's matched with the latest versions of Monitor Audio's FST 'dish' drive units, and installed in the cabinets using bolt-through mountings, further bracing with the company's usual high-quality wood and piano-lacquer finished enclosures, which now come with new 'floating' grilles.

The range starts with the Gold 50 standmount speakers at £950 per pair in dark walnut, high-gloss white and piano black gloss, with piano ebony finish adding £90 to the price, and goes up the Gold 300 floorstanders at £3000/pr, or £3600 in piano ebony. The range also includes centre and rear effects speakers for surround use, and a matching subwoofer.

Last month the Novafidelity X10 digital player/streamer was reviewed in these pages, and new from sister brand Cocktail Audio is the X40, **2** using a top-notch ESS Sabre 32-bit Hyperstream digital-to-

analogue converter to allow it to store and play PCM files of up to 32-bit/384kHz as well as DSD64 and DSD128, which are handled in native form.

The X40 can also record at up to 24-bit/192kHz — for example, from LP using its built-in moving magnet phono stage — has both XLR and phono audio outputs, and supports both 3.5in and 2.5in hard drives, as well as SSD storage. Prices start from £1199 for a 'bare bones' version without a hard drive installed, and rise to £1399 with a 4TB HDD, or £1899 with a 1TB SSD fitted.

The Cocktail Audio player can sit at the heart of a multiroom system, and the latest arrival in this field is German brand Raumfeld. **3** Its range includes a line-up of stereo speaker pairs and modular all-in-one stereo units, with integrated amplifiers and Wi-Fi connectivity, and are capable of lossless wireless streaming. There's also a unit, the £180 Connector, designed to integrate an existing hi-fi system into a wireless set-up.

The Raumfeld range starts with the £200 Stereo S speakers and the One S one-box stereo speaker, at £220, and all the products are available direct from www.teufelaudio.co.uk with an eight-week trial period policy.

On the subject of multiroom audio, Denon's HEOS system **4** has now gained

compatibility with the Google Cast content service, meaning that music, radio stations and podcasts can now be streamed directly to HEOS by Denon speaker systems via tablets or smartphones.

Also picking up on the streaming trend is McIntosh, with its latest digital-to-analogue converter/preamplifier, **5** designed for those who like to access their content via a home computer. The D150, at £3495, has five 24-bit/192kHz-capable digital inputs, including an asynchronous USB able to handle DSD64, DSD128, DXD 352.8kHz and DXD 384kHz, plus a DIN input to connect to the company's SACD/CD players and transports. The D150 has both balanced and RCA phono outputs, plus a built-in headphone amplifier.

Finally this month, a new range of high-end cables from Naim: the Super Lumina interconnects **6** have been designed for the company's Statement pre/power amplifier system, with which they're supplied, and now a wider Super Lumina range is available for use with other products. They use an enhanced version of Naim's decoupling Air-Plug connector, and use individually insulated silver-plated copper conductors in a tin-plated shield. Both interconnects and speaker cables are available with a variety of connectors. **G**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Bluesound Vault/PowerNode/Pulse

Innovative multiroom music system has simplicity and performance on its side

There's been something of an onslaught of wireless multiroom music systems coming to market just lately, whereas Sonos was once, more or less, the only game in town. Now we have the likes of Denon, Panasonic, Samsung and others joining the fray, along with a number of start-ups such as the UK-based Musaic.

The offering from each is pretty similar: powered speakers complete with wireless networking, able to access music stored on a home network, internet radio and streaming services such as Qobuz, Spotify and Tidal, and all under the control of apps running on smartphones and tablet devices.

Add an extra speaker to the system and it integrates seamlessly (provided it's from the same brand as the rest of your wireless set-up), while content can be shared with all the speakers in a system for whole-house 'party mode' music, or different music/sources played on each speaker.

At first glance, Bluesound looks like just another of those start-up companies joining this rapidly expanding market, but look a little deeper and you find that behind the brand is the Canadian-based company Lenbrook, founded nearly 40 years ago and with corporate roots stretching back for the better part of a century.

And if you're still wondering why that's significant, Lenbrook is behind the NAD brand, which more or less established itself with the classic 3020 amplifier back in the late 1970s, and has gone on to build a strong reputation for audio electronics able to perform beyond price expectations, many of its products still being designed by Bjørn Erik Edvardsen, who was responsible for the 3020. It also owns loudspeaker

BLUESOUND VAULT/POWERNODE/PULSE



Bluesound Vault

Type CD ripper/server/network player

Price £899

Storage 1TB

File formats/services handled Audio files up to 192kHz/24-bit, Internet radio, streaming services including Qobuz, Spotify and Tidal

Connections Ethernet, USB Type A for external storage, USB Type B Mini for servicing, optical digital out, analogue audio out on RCA phono

Accessories supplied Power supply, analogue audio cables, ethernet cable

Finishes Black or white

Dimensions (WxHxD) 29.3x23.9x20.8cm

Bluesound PowerNode

Type Network player with built-in amplifier

Price £599

File formats/services handled Audio files up to 192kHz/24-bit, Internet radio, streaming

services including Qobuz, Spotify and Tidal

Connections Ethernet/Wi-Fi, USB Type A for external

storage, USB Type B Mini for servicing, speaker and subwoofer outputs

Accessories supplied Ethernet cable, banana plugs for speaker cables

Finishes Black or white

Dimensions (WxHxD) 24.8 x 17.6 x 20.2cm

Bluesound Pulse

Type Network player/speaker system

Price £599

File formats/services handled Audio files up to 192kHz/24-bit, Internet radio, streaming services including Qobuz, Spotify and Tidal

Amplifier Bi-amplified, total power 80W

Drive units 2x7cm mid/treble, 13.5cm bass unit

Connections Connections ethernet/Wi-Fi, USB Type A for external storage, USB Type B Mini for servicing, optical digital output

Accessories supplied Ethernet cable

Finishes Black or white

Dimensions (WxHxD) 42x19.7x19cm

bluesound.com

company PSB, and not surprisingly technology from both companies finds its way into the Bluesound products, not to mention Bluesound technology being destined to find its way into NAD and PSB designs, enabling them to be integrated into wireless home music systems.

The initial Bluesound offering is built around a range of wedge-shaped devices: the Vault is a combined player/CD ripper/

storage device, available with 1TB of internal hard drive space and selling for £899, while there are two versions of the Node player. The Node itself (£399), has RCA line and digital optical outputs, and is designed for use with an existing hi-fi system, while the PowerNode is £200 more expensive, and has built-in NAD 35-bit/844kHz direct digital amplification delivering 50W per channel into 4ohms,

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

Here are a couple of pieces of kit to consider alongside the Bluesound system

BLUESOUND VAULT

The Bluesound Vault provides both storage and ripping, but should you need more space a NAS drive such as this QNAP TS-451, at around £400 plus hard drives, will do the job very well



APPLE'S AIRPORT EXTREME

Most of the wireless routers supplied by internet service providers are less than wonderful when it comes to setting up a music system: Apple's AirPort Extreme will take over the wireless duties and is rock-solid



plus a subwoofer output. Completing the system is a speaker package, the Duo, combining a powerful active subwoofer with a pair of small satellites, and an all-in-one player/speaker system, the £599 Pulse.

Supplied for this review were a Vault, a PowerNode and a Pulse, allowing me to set up a three-zone system, with the Vault in one room connected via its line-outs to my main set-up, the PowerNode, used with a pair of speakers in the dining room, and the Pulse acting as a very superior kitchen radio.

PERFORMANCE

Apart from its excellent sound, the most striking thing about the whole Bluesound system is how simple it is to set up and use: yes, you dig deep into the sub-menus of the devices and make all manner of detailed adjustments, but in essence this system is completely plug-and-play, using either wired connections between the various units or an existing wireless home network.

The Vault is connected via an ethernet cable to the home network router, enabling it to be accessed by any device on that network, and also allowing access to the internet for radio and streaming services, and also to look up discs as they are ripped to the internal storage.

Ripping couldn't be much simpler: post a CD into the slot-loading transport, and it's stored to the hard disk – or to other network storage if required – and then ejected. You can choose whether to store the music in FLAC for best quality, MP3 to save space, or both. Update the library by rescanning it at the end of a ripping session, and you're ready to play music.

Alternatively, music can be loaded from USB memory devices, and as with all the Bluesound units, control is via the company's app on iOS or Android devices, or using a desktop app on a computer over a network or directly, using Bluetooth.

Files at up to 192kHz/24-bit can be streamed, for example to the PowerNode or Pulse players. Both are just as simple to install and use as the Vault, and have the added benefit of wireless networking that's just as simple: you can connect to it wirelessly using a computer, smartphone or tablet, and use that device to input your home network password, after which it will find your home music store(s), whether they

are on a Bluesound Vault or another NAS device, computer or whatever.

As well as the Vault, I used my recently installed 12TB music server as a source for listening, and the Bluesound devices performed flawlessly. The PowerNode was connected to the Neat Iota speakers I normally use on my desk, the Vault ran through my usual Naim Supernait2/HiCap/PMC OB1 set-up, and the Pulse – which is compact, but hefty at 6.1kg, and depends on mains power, so you wouldn't want to lug it around too much! – was tried in various rooms around the house without ever once losing its network connectivity.

As you might expect, both the PowerNode and the Pulse draw on NAD's electronic expertise – the Pulse has a bi-amplified configuration delivering a total of 80W – while the speaker technology is sourced from PSB: the result is that even the Bluesound 'all-in-one' has a big, rich and powerful sound, offering bags of detail, while the PowerNode drives both the little Neat speakers and even some more ambitious transducers remarkably effectively. There's certainly enough power and definition on offer to fill most reasonably sized rooms, though if you have a truly massive space I'd suggest that the amp-less Node combined with a meatier amplifier may be a sensible solution.

Or, if you want some solid amplifier power with Bluesound onboard, high-end NAD hi-fi components built using the company's Modular Design Construction can accept a Bluesound 'card': it can be fitted to models including the C 390DD integrated amplifier and the new Master Series M12 DAC/preamplifier, and a separate card has been developed for the company's MDC-capable AV amplifiers and processors.

Whether with streaming services such as Tidal's lossless music, ripped CDs or higher-resolution music, all three components tried here performed beyond expectations, and delivered persuasive sound sufficient to convince any potential buyer of their desirability.

As I said at the beginning of this review, there isn't exactly a shortage of whole-house music systems on the market these days. However, the Bluesound products just happen to be some of the best-sounding and most attractive. **G**

Or you could try...

The Bluesound range is one of the most recent additions to the increasingly busy multiroom streaming arena where, as we note in our review, both new and familiar names are joining the fray

Sonos

Perhaps the best-known contender in this market is Sonos



which, over the past decade, has become a massive company. It offers a wide range of products from small go-anywhere speakers to complete surround systems, and even an all-in-one soundbar to carry TV sound as well as music, along with a wireless subwoofer that can be mounted on the wall. The Sonos range starts from around £170 for the Play:1 speaker: you can use it singly to extend a multiroom system to an extra room on a temporary basis, or pair up two Play:1s for stereo. For more information, visit **sonos.com**

HEOS 3, 5 and 7

Launched last summer, the HEOS by Denon system is a relative newcomer to the wireless multiroom arena, with a range of three powered speakers – HEOS 3, 5 and 7 – and a Link unit designed to connect into an existing audio system to make it part of a wireless system. Like others, HEOS is controlled using an app on a smartphone or tablet, and prices start from around £249 for the HEOS 3 speaker. More at **heosbydenon.denon.com**



Mu-so by Naim Audio

Finally, an all-in-one wireless streaming system with a winning sound, thanks to multiple speakers, digital amplification and digital signal processing, all housed in a sleek, high-quality unit, bristling with clever touches. Mu-so is the first all-in-one system from Naim Audio, and draws on the company's experience with its Uniti systems. It retails for £895, and you can find out more at **naimaudio.com/mu-so**



● REVIEW DENON DA-10

Chunky but versatile and flexible headphone amp

'Pocket' DAC/headphone amplifier is bulkier than some, but delivers on performance

The growth of headphone listening has been astounding: having once been relegated to a distress purchase, only bought if domestic circumstances demanded, or the headphones supplied with a portable player gave up the ghost after constant cable twisting and stretching, the headphone has again become a highly desirable audio purchase, for use at home or on the move.

Existing brands are enjoying a sales boom, while many new contenders have entered the market, from electronics and speaker brands diversifying, to new start-ups, and a whole new industry has sprung up around headphone listening. That's especially true for headphone amplifiers: the headphone output on a laptop computer, smartphone or tablet may be up to driving modest 'earbud' headphones, but there's better sound to be had with improved amplification, not to mention the addition of a higher-quality digital-to-analogue conversion section.

That's why so many companies are now offering headphone amplifiers, from small pocket devices running on rechargeable batteries to serious mains-powered DAC/amplifiers designed to drive high-end home-use headphones, and the past year or so has seen an explosion in these designs.

Surprisingly – given that it has been marketing a range of very good headphones for a long while – Denon has been a relatively late arrival in this sector: it launched its £329 desktop DA-300USB DAC/amplifier midway through last year, and only more recently has it added the portable DA-10 we have here, selling for £50 or so less. Meanwhile, stablemate Marantz has rolled out the very fine £699 HA-DAC1 for the desktop audio fan, reviewed a couple of months back.

Compared with some battery-powered DAC/amplifiers, such as similar models sold by Onkyo and TEAC, the Denon is quite chunky: it's a pretty standard 14cm or so long and just under 6.5cm wide, but quite thick at a shade under 3cm and weighs a little less than a quarter kilo. The benefit of this is that its minor controls, arranged along its flanks, are rather easier to use than the pinhead switches found on some rivals; and the volume control is both substantial-feeling and protected against inevitable pocket-knocks by a couple of metal extrusions.



SPECIFICATION

DENON DA-10

Type Portable DAC/headphone amplifier

Price £279

Inputs Micro USB, USB, stereo analogue on 3.5mm socket

Output Headphones/fixed line level on 3.5mm socket

File handling PCM up to 192kHz/24-bit, DSD2.8/5.6

Accessories supplied USB-Micro USB cable, USB-Apple 30-pin and USB-Apple Lightning cables, 3.5mm stereo analogue cable, carrying pouch

Dimensions (WxHxD) 6.4x13.9x2.9cm
denon.co.uk

Inputs include a micro-USB for charging and use with a computer, for which a cable is supplied, and a standard USB input for iOS devices, cables being supplied for both

'This is a highly capable digital to analogue converter/headphone amplifier in a relatively compact package'

the 'old' 30-pin dock connector and the current Lightning design. There's also an auxiliary analogue input on a 3.5mm stereo socket, again with a cable supplied – a 3.5mm-to-3.5mm design – and the DA-10 comes with a carrying pouch large enough to hold both the DAC/amp and a smartphone, and clear front panel through which devices can be operated.

There's switchable gain, and the headphone output can be converted into a fixed-gain feed, for example for use with an external amplifier, while the DAC section will accept content at up to 192kHz/24-bit and DSD5.6, and has Denon's AL32 processing to enhance the sound of incoming signals by expanding resolution from 16-bit to 32 bits. The digital-to-analogue converter itself is a 192kHz/

32-bit design, and the master clock uses two crystals – running at 22.5792 and 24.576 MHz – for accurate conversion of a wide range of signals.

PERFORMANCE

In other words, this is a highly capable digital to analogue converter/headphone amplifier in a (relatively) compact package – and having used it as both a portable and desktop device with a wide range of headphones, from little Sony in-ears to the upmarket Oppo PM-1, and with sources from my Fiio X3 digital player and Apple iPhone 5 through to my MacBook Air and Mac Mini computers, I have found much to like in the way the Denon plays music.

As ever, drivers are required, and supplied, to allow the Denon to work with Windows computers, while Macs are plug and play, but beyond that set-up is simple, and clearly covered in the comprehensive manual supplied on CD with the DA-10.

In use it's electrically quiet, producing no signs of noise or hiss unless the volume is turned up full without a source connected, and the unit set to charge while playing (when a little hum is apparent), and with judicious use of the gain control has a very usable volume range from quiet to as loud as anyone is ever likely to need.

That sound quality is mirrored when it's used as a DAC into an external amplifier, with an especially big and powerful sound when playing high-resolution files. It's especially impressive with DSD recordings, delivering effortless music, packed with information. For a small device, it's remarkable how well it focuses attention on the performance, and how rapidly one takes for granted just how good it sounds.

It also combines fine handling of detail with plenty of grip and clout when one plays large-scale music at 'realistic' levels, allied to a smooth, insightful presentation of smaller-scale works, very much on a par with Denon's deskbound DA-300USB.

In fact, this could be viewed as a more convenient version of that desktop DAC, producing the same performance at home, while enabling you to take that sound quality out and about – on planes, buses or trains, or connected to a laptop computer, for example in a hotel room.

As the centrepiece of a very capable headphone-based listening system, it's a convincing buy at a sensible price. **G**

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● ESSAY

'We should be celebrating audio, not attacking it...'

As online cynicism about decent hi-fi hits epic levels, it was nice to take a break in Japan



Hi-fi shopping in Japan: still an inspiring business with a huge breadth and depth of product

A recent visit to Japan was just the tonic I needed: not just to take time to catch up with the in-laws, visit some favourite haunts and stroll around shopping areas far removed from Britain's identikit-and-shop-to-rent high streets, but also to see places where there is still a real enthusiasm for the latest trends in audio equipment.

You see, spend any amount of time on the internet forums dedicated to audio and AV equipment, and you could come away pretty depressed. Every new product seems to be attacked as too expensive, too complex and offering nothing a home-made lash-up couldn't do better; retailers are not to be trusted, and manufacturers even less so; and anyone expressing any kind of enthusiasm soon gets shouted down by an onslaught of nay-sayers.

It can sometimes seem that those of us still writing about this stuff because it really excites us, rather than simply to feed an ever-hungry click-generating machine, are fighting a losing battle. As the Japanese saying has it, 'deru kugi wa utareru' ('the nail that sticks up gets hammered down') – and sometimes it seems easy to see oneself as that sticky-up nail, about to be put in one's place by a growing cynical conformity.

That conformity would have you believe that all properly designed amplifiers sound the same, that an iPhone sounds as good as the best high-end headphone amplifier, that any format beyond CD's 16-bit/44.1kHz is a waste of both bandwidth and money, and even – and this is an extreme one – that streamed TV and films sound better than commercial music

recordings (though better – how? – isn't ever quite explained).

So why was my Japanese visit so encouraging? Well, I'm a strong believer in celebrating audio, not attacking it, and in Japan I found not just a huge selection of audio equipment on sale and available to audition, but also promotions for high-resolution audio and more. What's more,

'I saw more Tannoy and JBL speakers in one place than I have in almost any British or American shop I can recall'

while Japanese consumers tend to favour products made by home manufacturers – you don't see too many Kias or Hyundais on Japanese streets and highways either – in the audio arena there's still an appreciation for products from some of audio's legendary overseas manufacturers.

I saw more Tannoy and JBL speakers in one place in a Japanese store than I have in almost any British or American shop I can remember, along with the likes of Bowers & Wilkins, Klipsch and many more 'Western' brands.

And they weren't in specialist hi-fi stores squierled away in back streets, but in huge consumer electronics emporia in prime locations next to city railway stations, selling everything from cameras to washing machines to air-conditioners to bicycles and suitcases to hi-fi.

Of course, I've been to these shops before: before it was overrun with computer software and games and manga and anime,

Tokyo's Akihabara 'Electric Town' was full of shops like this – not to mention the ones offering every known accessory for your Walkman, camera or whatever. These days, the main survivor in that arena is Yodobashi Camera, which has a massive store, albeit now off the main street, with everything from novelty watches to a multi-restaurant food court.

But it was encouraging to see in the cities I visited – including Japan's second city, Osaka, and Kyoto – that such stores were not just thriving, but also still devoting the kind of floorspace to audio and AV equipment that makes it clear this is still an important market sector. In both Yodobashi Camera and rival Bic Camera in Kyoto, a city best-known for its tourist sights but also a serious shopping attraction, there were not only displays dedicated to high-resolution audio, but listening areas packed with a huge variety of players, amplifiers and speakers, all ready to be fired up and auditioned.

OK, so it's not exactly the famous ideal of the single-speaker demonstration room – or at least a room with only one pair of speakers in it – but the breadth and depth of product, from entry-level to high-end, and both domestic and imported, is truly inspiring. Not much chance of turning up at one of these shops and being told, 'We don't have a demonstration model': if the manufacturer makes it, chances are they have it.

And if you're used to your local hi-fi shop or electrical retailing shed having a dozen or so headphones on sale, some of which are available for demonstration, the range available in Yodobashi camera would amaze you. There must have been well over 1000 different models on sale, from sub-£10 in-ear designs perfect for replacing phone or iPod earbuds in an emergency, right up to the highest of high-end models. And along one side of the headphone department, which is larger than most hi-fi shops in the UK, is a whole row of listening bays, each with a good-quality player and half a dozen or so pairs of headphones to try out.

Was I like a kid in a sweetshop? You bet – I'd probably still be there now if I hadn't been dragged away to catch a train to our next destination. Outside the station of which was another of these huge consumer electronics palaces... **G**

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Let's credit Winterreise's poet

I read with great interest the article by Richard Wigmore, 'Journey Without End', on Schubert's *Winterreise* (January, page 10). It gave a comprehensive overview of the performances and great detail about the composer's approach to setting the poems to music. However, it's a shame he didn't have the space to write more about Wilhelm Müller who wrote those 24 poems. Although Schubert immortalised them, much of the credit should be given to the poet who actually described the feelings and impressions of the 'wanderer'.

Boris Mutafeliya
Fairfax, VA, USA

Jackie and Daniel on tour

I'm writing to say how much I enjoyed Sarah Kirkup's piece on Jacqueline du Pré in the February issue (page 10).

I am old enough to have seen her play a number of times, in Southern California (where I was attending Pomona College in Claremont). The most unforgettable experience was the first: I heard her play the Schumann Concerto with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, with her husband, Daniel Barenboim, conducting. (I swear that she was wearing the same blue gown that you show in the colour photograph on page 11...one doesn't forget something like that!) It happened that my seat was close to the stage, and the impact of her playing and sheer presence were quite overwhelming.

I also saw her perform the Dvořák Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra



Sitting close to du Pré was an experience in itself

Letter of the Month

Another small CD haven closes its doors



I note with great sadness the passing of Bath Compact Discs. Through its founder, John Cervenka, Bath CDs had its origins in Orpheus Records, a delightful shop in Southsea dating from the early 1970s. I remember being taken there often by my mother; the particular sound of flicking through the shelves of records, the dull slap of plastic sleeve on plastic sleeve; the seemingly endless



stream of dour brown boxes as my mother bought volume after volume of the Harnoncourt/Leonhardt

Bach Cantatas; the imposing promotional photos of Fischer-Dieskau, Christa Ludwig and other iconic figures of the age; and always I remember John's friendly welcome, deep enthusiasm and endless erudition.

Therein lay the germ of my own record collecting. I am immensely grateful to Orpheus Records and Bath CDs for fuelling my passion and expanding my horizons.

Matthew Tozer
Balsham, Cambs, UK

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the May issue by March 30. Gramophone reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

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(again, with Barenboim conducting) at the University of California, Irvine, in 1971. The concert was given in an athletics gymnasium, and I was seated in the bleachers section, but I still vividly recall the performance in my mind's eye and ear. I went round afterward and had the pleasure of meeting her briefly...she was very friendly, and told me she had just recorded the same work with the Chicago Symphony.

I was also fortunate to hear her in a sonata recital (Beethoven, Brahms) with Barenboim at the piano, at UCLA, around the same time.

Later that decade, in 1979, I heard her narrate *Peter and the Wolf* (from her wheelchair) in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, with Barenboim conducting the ECO. It was around this time that they recorded the piece for DG. The ravages of those few intervening years were

painful to behold...yet her courage in the face of great adversity was palpable.

Stephen Cera
Toronto, Canada

Cutting out the coughs

Having attended all the symphony concerts of Sir Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic's London residency, I listened to them again while recording them for my home library. I was taken aback by the virtual absence of coughing in the recordings, even in the breaks between movements, in the middle of the cold and flu season. Had the BBC found some way of editing it out or were we simply a well-mannered or, more likely, very focused audience?

Whatever the reason, it's now clear that many of those people who cough and clear their throats so vigorously at concerts, have no need to do it.

Perhaps we non-coughers should be bolder and encourage coughing neighbours to stop it, perhaps offering a cough sweet. I sympathise with genuine ones, though, like the man in front of me in the stalls at the Proms last year, who was so stricken early in the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony that he left the hall, missing a treat from the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.

Pauline Caldwell
Calne, Wiltshire

Readers may like to know that Sir Simon Rattle and the BPO's Sibelius symphony cycle was recorded live in Berlin the week before the London concerts and will be released on the orchestra's own label this autumn – Ed

Still enjoying G&S

How welcome to see an article on an operetta, G&S's *The Mikado* (Classics Reconsidered, March, page 98). I recall that in the past Andrew Lamb used to review recordings of operetta in the magazine from time to time in spite of the snobbish view among many lovers of so-called 'classical music' in this country that it is too low-brow for them. While I have an extensive collection of classical music from the 1950s to date, I also get much entertainment from the operettas of Offenbach, Johann Strauss II, Franz



Fashionable or not, operettas like *The Mikado* can revive the spirits like 'a glass of champagne'

Lehár, Emmerich Kalman *et al* which revive one's spirits like a glass of champagne!

Royston Le Duc
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Editorial notes

In his review of Ann Murray's Brahms and Schumann Lieder recital for Linn (March,

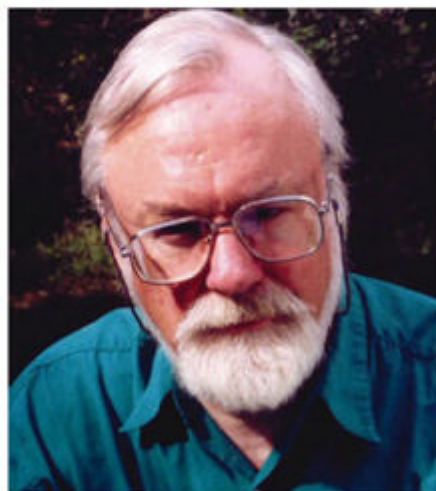
page 80), Richard Wigmore alluded to 'several years after her retirement from the concert platform'. Ann Murray has not retired from performing although this release is described, by Linn, as 'her final Lieder recording and a fitting way to draw her long and distinguished recording career to a close'.

OBITUARIES

A highly regarded British composer, an admired Welsh mezzo, and a one-time Gramophone ad manager

JOHN MCCABE

Composer and pianist
Born April 21, 1939
Died February 13, 2015



John McCabe was one of the UK's most prolific composers and a fine pianist. He died, aged 75, following a long battle

with a brain tumour. Born in Liverpool he attended the Liverpool Institute (alongside fellow pupils, George Harrison and Paul McCartney), before attending Manchester University and the Royal Manchester College (now the Royal Northern College of Music) where he studied piano and composition. He then spent a year in Munich working with Harald Genzmer and others.

A prolific composer from his childhood (he'd written 13 symphonies before the age of 11!), McCabe quickly established himself and received some high-profile performances soon after concluding his studies. His First Violin Concerto (1959), *Variations on a Theme of Hartmann* (1964) and First Symphony (1965) were all performed by the Hallé Orchestra.

His music was later taken up by conductors of the stature of Sir Georg Solti, André Previn and Bernard Haitink.

During the 1960s and '70s he was also busy as a pianist and recorded American

songs with Marni Nixon, the complete Nielsen piano music and complete Haydn keyboard sonatas; as *Gramophone* commented in December 1995, 'In addition to being a fine pianist, McCabe is also an accomplished composer, and the special qualities he brings to his performances benefit from his "insider's" awareness of musical content, pursuing the structural argument in these pieces with the acute perceptions of a composer's ear.' He also wrote books about Alan Rawsthorne, Bartók and Haydn.

His output included seven symphonies, many concertos, five ballet scores (including two for Birmingham Royal Ballet) and a large quantity of piano and chamber music (including seven string quartets). Writing about McCabe in the March 2014 issue of *Gramophone*, Guy Rickards described McCabe's musical voice as highly individual, based on a mix of Vaughan Williams, Britten and Tippett leavened with Karl Amadeus Hartmann

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and serial procedures – although his writing has always been tonal’.

Among musical partnerships, he worked with the cellist Julian Lloyd Webber, violinist Erich Gruenberg, horn player Ifor James and the soprano Jane Manning.

MAUREEN GUY

Mezzo-soprano

Born July 10, 1932

Died February 14, 2015

From coalminer’s daughter in Penclawdd west of Swansea, to the Investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1969 and professorship at the Welsh College of Music and Drama, Maureen Guy was a Welsh lass through and through. She continued to teach until a matter of weeks before her death at the age of 82, and made a huge contribution to British music generally over the previous six decades.

Ruth Maureen Guy won the Glamorgan Scholarship at 18, which took her to London’s Guildhall. She was a finalist for the 1955 Kathleen Ferrier Award, and graduated to a busy professional life, appearing with such London ensembles as the Mozart Players, Sadler’s Wells Opera, the Philharmonia and the LPO, and at Wigmore Hall. Other major engagements included her appointment as a principal artist with the Royal Opera in 1963, the year she also appeared in a Proms celebration of the 150th anniversary of Wagner’s birth.

Further career highlights included Fosskilde on Solti’s *Ring* recording and Beethoven’s Ninth in Jerusalem with the Israel Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta, and regular appearances with the

Frankfurt Opera in the ’70s. With her husband, the tenor John Mitchinson, she also helped to run the Three Choirs Festival for many years.

BARRY IRVING

Publisher and Advertisement Director

Born May 19, 1945

Died February 19, 2015



Gramophone’s former Advertisement Director Barry Irving has died, aged 69. A well-loved figure in the music industry, Irving joined *Gramophone* in July 1965 as assistant to then Advertisement Manager Reg Pollard. When Pollard retired in January 1972, Barry succeeded him and ran the department for the next 24 years before taking on a business development role. When Haymarket acquired *Gramophone* in 1999, Barry Irving left the company and shortly after founded *International Record Review* which he ran, alongside Máire Taylor, until his death.

NEXT MONTH
MAY 2015



The influence of recordings on contemporary music

James McCarthy speaks to John Luther Adams and others about how recordings have shaped their output

Byrd’s Masses – which to own?

Fabrice Fitch picks his favourite recordings of these gems of the English choral tradition

Paavo Järvi: the role of recording

Geoffrey Norris meets the Estonian conductor who is rarely out of the studio to talk about his latest offerings of works by Shostakovich and Mahler

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Diana Vishneva

The Russian ballerina on her evolving musical tastes, her love of dancing to a live orchestra, and her gratitude to Valery Gergiev

My mother used to play the piano, as did my older sister. I remember my mother telling me stories about how my grandmother had insisted that she study music; she was always under pressure from her parents, so perhaps that was the reason I wasn't that interested in music as a child. When I started to dance, though – and especially later at the Vaganova Academy – music became a very important part of my life. I still remember the first time I saw Van Cliburn playing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1; I was a Vaganova Academy student at the time and I watched the concert on TV with my parents – after so many years, I still remember that.

My dancing has influenced my taste in music. Growing up, I mainly listened to both Russian and Western pop music, and I've always loved the Russian composers – Stravinsky, and of course Tchaikovsky. But as my repertoire has developed I have learned more about composers such as John Adams and Philip Glass, and also discovered for myself a few new names such as Giovanni Sollima. Carolyn Carlson chose his music for 'Woman in a Room', the piece she choreographed for my new project 'On the Edge', which I'm bringing to London in April and am very excited about.

Most choreographers come to rehearsal with interesting ideas about music. When Alexei Ratmansky choreographed *Pierrot Lunaire* for me I was initially upset because I couldn't believe that this music could work for dance, but Ratmansky helped me to understand Schoenberg; I later fell in love with the music, and began to listen to more and more Schoenberg. Nowadays – mostly on my iPhone – I listen to a lot of new music. My last ballet premiere was John Neumeier's *Tatiana*, with a score by Lera Auerbach – very contemporary, very difficult to dance to, but after a few performances I sought out more of her recordings. So there's definitely a connection between my dance career and the music I love to listen to.

Since joining the Mariinsky Ballet, I have danced a lot of performances with Maestro Gergiev conducting, and he has had a huge influence on me and my tastes in classical music. The very first ballet I danced with him was Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, then Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade*, and later, Prokofiev's *Cinderella*, Ravel's *Boléro* – and also some great classical ballets such as Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and Minkus's *La bayadère*. It's always difficult to dance when he's conducting because he cares more about the music than the dance, but it's still a pleasure because you can hear the high quality of the music.

Dancing to live music is so different from dancing to music that's recorded. Live music gives you different impressions



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I have danced a lot at the Mariinsky Ballet with Gergiev conducting – his influence has been huge.

and feelings on stage; it helps you to understand and create your role and, being led by a conductor, you feel like you're not alone. Like any dancer, I love to perform with a live orchestra, even though the risk is higher because so many people are involved in your dance. Sometimes, depending on the circumstances, you must perform to recorded music, but I'm always careful that the quality is as good as it can be.

As well as Gergiev, who is a such an important role model, I've also met and been influenced by other musicians over the past 20 years of my professional career, particularly the pianist Alexei Goribol whom I've worked with a lot, and the violinist Maxim Vengerov. I met Vengerov in Monte Carlo at a charity event at which I danced 'The Dying Swan' accompanied by him playing the music by Saint-Saëns – it was a very positive experience.

Away from music, I love silence – I feel like silence is a kind of music, too. I love the sound of nature, especially water, the sea, the ocean – it's so relaxing. After a very tense performance schedule, it's just what I need. **G**

Diana Vishneva's 'On the Edge' is at the London Coliseum on April 14, 16 and 18. For more information, visit eno.org



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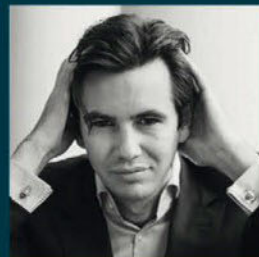
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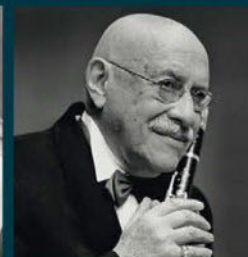
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